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ABSTRACT

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have demonstrated effectiveness in a spectrum of activities, including outreach to the poor, action against gender discrimination, and relief services. Partnerships between government and NGOs offer unique opportunities for progress toward sustainable development. In the context of some recent government directives in India, there is speculation in the NGO community that responsibility for conducting the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programs in some areas will gradually be handed over to NGOs. This document summarizes a consultation on NGO-Government Partnerships for Child Care, during which the experiences of successful partnerships were shared and issues affecting the expanding role of NGOs were raised. The chapters of the proceedings are: (1) "Building People's Capacities" (Sarala Gopalan); (2) "Learning from Success Stories" (Chandra Ghariyali); (3) "Evolving Appropriate Structures" (Khin Sandi Lwin); (4) "Critical Issues in Partnership" (Adarsh Sharma); (5) "Child Care--The URMUL Experience" (Sanjoy Ghose); (6) "Child Care--The RASS Experience" (G. Munirathnam); (7) "Partnership for Literacy--The Arivoli Experience" (V. B. Athreya and Sheela Rani Chunkath); (8) "Women and Credit" (Anita Praveen); and (9) "MYRADA [Mysore Resettlement and Development Agency]--A Background Note" (E. Swaminathan). The proceedings also includes a discussion of outcomes, and a list of participants. (BGC)

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Design for Partnership

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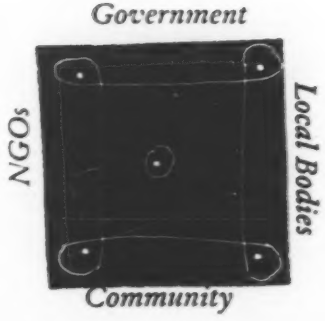

Proceedings of a Consultation on NGO-Government Partnership for Child Ca.

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Design for Partnership

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Jointly Sponsored by

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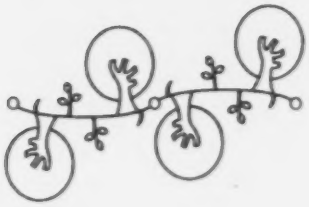

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Preface

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have demonstrated their effectiveness in a wide spectrum of activities including reaching the unreached poor, taking action against gender discrimination and providing relief services. Often, this has been a result of unique capacities for service delivery and flexibility in responding to the people's changing needs and demands. On the other hand, government has wide coverage in both geographical area and population as well as access to funds.

Consequently, partnership between government and NGOs offers unique opportunities for synergy and progress toward sustainable development. The government has a stake in building relationships with NGOs, particularly in child care services, which have become a critical component of the multi-dimensional approach to the development of children below 6 years.

In the context of some recent government directives, there has been a widespread feeling in the NGO community that the responsibility for conducting the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programmes in some areas will gradually be handed over to NGOs. However, concern has been expressed on the conditionalities for implementation. The NGO sector needs a clear understanding of the policy and the nature of government thinking on this issue.

Therefore, we felt that the time was ripe for NGOs to discuss the issues that are likely to arise as partnership becomes more widespread. This consultation was designed to do just that, as well as to give NGOs a forum in which to make suggestions regarding their needs.

We decided to start by sharing the experiences of successful partnerhips, not only in child care, but in other spheres as well, including literacy, health and women's development.Collaborators in established partnerships were invited to give their insights, outline the general issues involved in partnership and provide the context for discussion of child care services. This offered conference participants the opportunity to:

- Learn from these experiences and to clarify the issues related to partnership.
- Study the diverse methodologies developed for application to a wide range of situations.
- Explore the problems and challenges facing partner organisations.

Apart from the presentations, several issues were also raised as challenges by senior government and international officials in the inaugural session and contextualised in the overview by the keynote speaker. The responses of the participants to these challenging issues led to a crystallisation of the outcomes of the discussion, included on page 57 of this report. We are happy to note that these outcomes have focused on several issues crucial to government-NGO partnership.

While the original intention was only to discuss the conditions for bilateral partnership between NGOs and the government, the presentations clearly indicated the need for a partnership "triad" involving the local bodies and grassroots structures as well. The group's discussions later went on to postulate a four-cornered partnership including the community. This broadening concept of partnership has profound implications for the future direction of child care services in the state and elsewhere in the country.

During this consultation, the need for trust and flexibility emerged as essential elements of successful partnership. An important suggestion here was related to the funding of child care programmes on a per child basis. The discussion also centered around the strategies of partnership such as developing grassroots structures, empowering the community and networking. There was a strong plea for co-ordination between the government departments concerned with child care. Quite a few important issues with regard to management of child care services were also addressed, one highlight being the call for community structures to take up the running of child care centres.

We are confident that these far-reaching outcomes would be helpful in formulating or improving policies for child care, apart from providing guidelines for successful partnerships and helping NGOs better understand the implications of partnership.

We thank all the resource persons who shared their valuable experiences with us. We express our gratitude to the officers from the government, who despite the many demands on their time, participated and provided useful insights. Finally, we are grateful to the Bernard van Leer Foundation for making this publication possible.

Ms. Mina Swaminathan
Hon. Director
Project ACCESS, MSSRF

Ms. Andal Damodaran
Hon. Gen. Secretary
ICCW - Tamil Nadu

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BUILDING PEOPLE'S CAPACITIES

Inaugural Address
Dr. Sarala Gopalan, I.A.S.
Secretary to Government of India
Department of Women and Child Development
Ministry of Human Resources Development

The first lesson about self-reliance can be learned from the Community Development Programme launched in the 1950s. The programme was designed to promote development with community participation over a 10-year period. This experience showed us that increased government assistance can ultimately reduce a community's capacity for self-reliance.

If the real intention is community development, self-reliance should be encouraged from the start. Otherwise, a project will be successful only as long as funding is available, or as long as there is a dedicated government officer and the political will to support the programme. When these things fail, the programme will fail. This has been the case with many institutions, including NGOs. The lesson is to build systems, so that when individuals withdraw, the system continues to perform.

Community Structures

The primary objective of partnerships between government and the NGOs should be to strengthen community structures. This strategy has tremendous potential to contribute to sustainable development.

Building strong community structures has proven to be a challenge. For instance, Mahila Mandals never wholly succeeded as they depended heavily on their leaders. Similarly, in the case of DWCRA programme there are few groups in the country that are doing well. Here again, these organisations became artificial groupings without synergy, and the expected inter-weaving of interests and collaboration did not come about. Consequently, resources and support from the government have been very weak, and banks have been reluctant to give money to these groups.

Integration and Convergence

The first priority is to bring about integration between the different line departments that are involved in sectoral activities - both social and economic. Wherever women's groups have been created and child care has been undertaken, we have found that it cannot be improved without looking into the mothers' income, access to health care and nutrition.

When both programmes have been developed simultaneously, they have been successful. Although each requires a different kind of expertise, at the community level they have to be addressed concurrently. If there is no child care, women cannot initiate economic activities, and consequently, poverty and its attendant problems cannot be eradicated.

Government programmes are very compartmentalised, and often would benefit from greater integration and flexibility. NGOs have this flexibility, which has contributed to the success of their ICDS programmes. The strength of NGOs lies in the co-ordination of activities and integration of programs. However, this unique ability needs to be more fully utilised.

The role of the government should be to empower NGOs and improve their capacity to network with other NGOs and government functionaries. This will facilitate the exchange of ideas and aid NGOs in delivering their services effectively.

There are many dedicated government officers who are willing to experiment, work with the people and learn from them. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Similarly, not all NGOs have excellent records, and one has to be careful where money is placed.

NGOs and ICDS

At present, the Government of India cannot insist on the delegation of ICDS projects to NGOs as many states are not yet prepared for that step. However, we advise that any part of the project which directly overlaps with the area of expertise of a given NGO can be delegated to that organisation.

The Indira Mahila Yojana, a new mechanism for co-ordination, has been built on the same premise as the ICDS programme. This programme attempts to ensure that the various functionaries from different line departments synchronise their work at the village level.

The original intention was to bring together all the programmes for women under the Department of Women and Child Development. However, there was reluctance from other departments to part with programmes under their control, leading to four years of deadlock.

Working with Groups

The Urban Basic Services Programme of UNICEF took a new approach to the involvement of women's groups. The groups were homogenous, which allowed for greater democracy and the identification of the women's needs. This experiment has taught us the importance of an organisation acting as a catalyst. Getting people together needs a lot of initial effort, but when they come together they can achieve a lot. We have seen that after women attend two or three meetings they participate effectively in group activities.

The main objective of the recently launched Indira Mahila Yojana is to strengthen the community group of women. For this purpose, the ICDS structure will be used, dividing the women from these centres into homogenous groups. The Indira Mahila Kendras (IMK) at the anganwadi level, consist of approximately 250 women divided into about 10 groups. We can provide them with access to sources of credit and various programmes in technical skills, employment generation, health care, and literacy. This will empower the women to participate in the decision making process and help them share in the benefits of development.

The lesson that must be learned is to help build systems, so that when individuals withdraw, the system remains and continues to perform.

Role of NGOs

A very important link for the IMK would be an NGO who could act as the resource organiser. NGOs have to be identified on a community development block basis so that they can help these women's groups, and the government officials in a variety of activities. The money that has been allocated is only Rs. 10,000 at the block level and each IMK would get Rs. 5000. But further resources may be generated by the group itself either through membership fee, or by attracting greater credit. This has happened in Alleppey in Kerala and also to some extent in Salem in Tamil Nadu.

The Department of Women and Child Development, Government of India would like to be such a catalyst, offering inputs mainly through NGOs. In this context, it is very necessary to build flexibility. Unfortunately the entire system of government is based on the principle of "no trust." Today, both bureaucrats and NGOs are often viewed in a negative light: the former because they are seen as hindrances to innovation and progress, and the latter because they are thought of as money-making entities. Our first effort before installing NGOs as monitors should be to remove this lack of trust.

New Challenges

New challenges would include seeing how well the creches established under the National Creche Fund and the CSWB can get harmonised with the new set of services. or how well NGOs can get prepared to take up such services. New and durable systems for this have yet to come into being. Multiple sourcing of funds for government programmes run by NGOs should be no problem. provided proper accounts are maintained. The scale of government assistance is currently small. so flexibility in raising the additional funding to maintain the quality of service should be possible. provided quality is ensured.

Above. all we must get rid of the "no trust" policy. This lack of trust is rooted in a real danger that an unscrupulous organisation could collect money from several sources for the same activity. The community should monitor these issues for themselves to ensure honesty. If this is done. there should be no problem in allowing supplementation of resources. The government. the NGOs and the community have to come together and work out how best to achieve results. This would undoubtedly contribute to dealing effectively with problems of nutrition. illiteracy and poor health and help in bringing about the empowerment of the community.

The ultimate objective has to be to create capacities in people.

LEARNING FROM SUCCESS STORIES

Special Address
Ms. Chandra Ghariyali, I.A.S.
Secretary to
Government of Tamil Nadu
Department of Social Welfare

The Government of Tamil Nadu has always taken a forward-looking approach to partnership with NGOs, particularly in the areas of health and family welfare. We have always tried to make the Family Planning Programme a people's movement, and that is why during the period of the 8th Five Year Plan, Tamil Nadu achieved the country's highest decline in birth rate. The credit for this goes to NGOs, people's participation and the government. Even though the percentage of actual service delivery by NGOs was only about 20%, more than 50% of the motivation can be attributed to them.

Design for Partnership

The Health and Family Planning IPP V Project was India's first experiment in handing an entire programme over to an NGO, with government providing money, buildings and equipment. Twenty-five percent of health and family welfare service delivery in the project at Madras is done through NGOs. The success of their partnership has received recognition from around the world.

However, of the total 108 health posts, only 27 could be handed over to NGOs. We would have liked to delegate 50%, but were unable to find suitable NGOs for many posts. To ensure the quality of services, government needs to carefully consider the limitations of potential partners. The capacity of an NGO to manage a programme will depend upon its human and financial resources, its capabilities and commitment, its knowledge of the service area and its relationship with the people. Sincere efforts were made to include more NGOs, but on the contrary, one or two of the original group dropped out after finding it difficult to work in certain areas. The 27 health posts were run entirely by NGOs,

including minority, Muslim and Christian organisations, among others. Throughout Tamil Nadu, they have been able to bring services to people beyond the reach of government programmes.

Women's Empowerment

Another excellent example in which an entire programme has been undertaken by NGOs is the IFAD-assisted Women's Development Programme. Women's groups have been formed at the local level to raise awareness and to promote income-generation and savings activities. In all five districts in Tamil Nadu where this programme is going on, it is run purely by NGOs. Reservations were expressed initially, but the NGOs have taken the initiative to set up new offices and units, and to train the local people.

The IFAD-assisted programme may be the only example of a government programme run entirely by NGOs. The government's only role is supervisory. We are proud to say that the repayment levels in this programme are very high (90-99%) and women are paying back their bank loans. This has not happened in other women's programmes which have not involved NGOs, such as DWCRA.

Certain activities at micro-level require a lot of time and energy, and overworked government servants do not have the resources to spend hours motivating people. NGOs are needed to do this kind of grassroots level work.

In the future, we intend to engage NGOs as partners in establishing any DWCRA-type programmes or women's group activity. NGOs can help keep communications lines open with the local level so that corrective action can be taken early as problems emerge.

Child Care

Our child care programmes have the support of ICCW and other NGOs in the state of Tamil Nadu. We are particularly indebted to these groups for their contributions in protection of the girl child in Madurai, where female infanticide is prevalent in certain blocks. They have been effective with their active approach of demonstrating outside a household where there is a possibility of infanticide.

NGOs often find it difficult to perform when asked to fit into rigidly defined programmes with fixed norms. Therefore, if partnerships are to succeed, the Government of India needs to be more flexible, providing a loose structure and allowing variation in execution depending on the resources available. When NGOs are asked to work in difficult areas, where government servants have been unable to, we have to appreciate the limitations of those areas and allow for additional creativity in approach.

The Future

The Government of Tamil Nadu has worked effectively with NGOs and would like to keep them at the forefront of its activities. Nutrition, in particular, offers special opportunities to do so. The new nutrition policy clearly mentions new facilities and programmes which can be handled through NGOs. Similarly, some of the greatest potential for new ICDS projects lies within the voluntary sector.

In areas not covered by the TINP programme, where balwadis could not be set up due to a shortfall in the required population norms, community participation is being developed by volunteers who take the programme to the hamlets. The same approach can be tried with ICDS also. In TINP III Project under preparation, emphasis is being placed on community participation, management and ownership. Eventually the balwadi should be a responsibility of the community. The women's groups formed under IFAD may also be helped in setting up creches with their own money, with whatever little technical and other support they need.

Participation is a continuous process, and the challenge is to introduce more and more of it into community life. That is where our priority must lie.

Participation is a continuous process, and the challenge is to introduce more and more of it into community life. That is where our priority must lie.

EVOLVING APPROPRIATE STRUCTURES

Special Address:
Ms. Khin Sandi Lwin
Regional Representative
UNICEF
Southern Region

UNICEF's experience in working with NGOs in India shows that there is a lot yet to be learned, not only from the successful partnerships, but from the failures as well. In order to establish effective partnerships, it is necessary to determine which NGOs have expertise in specific areas. However, the government does not have the capacity to collect this information, and so a network of NGOs is needed to foster partnership.

This consultation today, which is being organised by NGOs with no support from UNICEF, is a step in the right direction.

Partnership between government and NGOs may be conceived of at four levels :

- Policy (analysis, guidance).
- Action plans (planning, monitoring).
- Complementary actions.
- Joint actions.

At the same time, attitudinal changes are needed to go along with that partnership. That means mutual understanding of each others' concerns, interests and goals, and a common plan of action. Tamil Nadu has developed the country's first State Plan of Action for children, derived from the National Plan of Action. As states become stronger in their capacity to develop partnerships with NGOs, UNICEF can withdraw progressively from that role.

Design for Partnership

However, there are some obstacles inherent in the existing structure, as illustrated in Figure 1. There is the government pyramid on the one hand and a myriad of NGOs on the other, who are often not themselves in partnership, though there may be some networking at national and state-level by NGOs. While the government is often assumed as one entity, it is made up of many vertical systems and departments which in

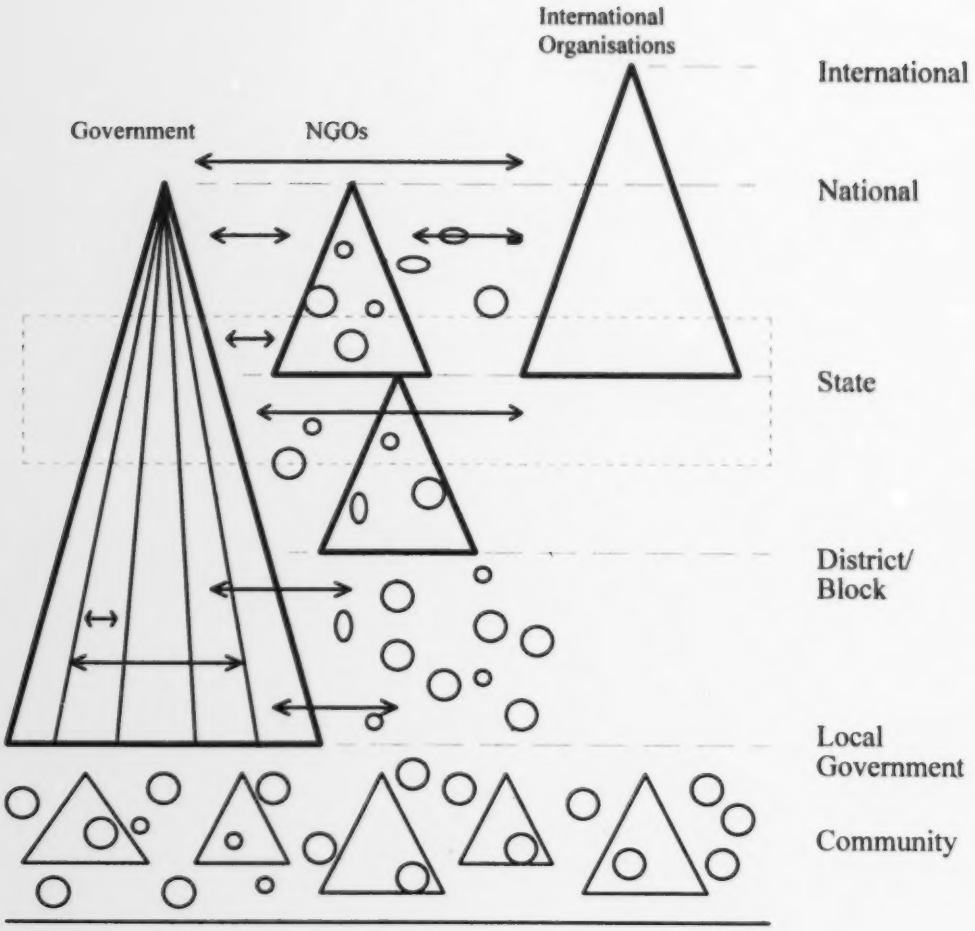

Figure 1. Existing structures and attempts at partnership.

themselves need coordination and "networking." NGOs work at different levels, and some try to network at these different levels as indicated by the dotted lines in the figure. International organisations come up to a particular level and partnership stays up at that level only. Most often, the bottom level is forgotton - the local bodies and the communities that are meant to be "served."

Sometimes partnership is visualised as involving international organisations, government and NGOs, as illustrated in Figure 2.

While our objective is to find ways of improving government-NGO partnership, in the final analysis, partnership has to be conceived as a triad with the government, the community and NGOs as the three corners, as illustrated in Figure 3. The local community structures are the ones which will actually carry on the work. Whether service-oriented, policy-oriented or grassroots organisers, NGOs still are outsiders. The grassroots NGOs that need to emerge are the community structures or women's societies at the local level.

The Department of Women and Child Development, other departments and some NGOs are already developing programmes to build up these community structures. The partnership of the current NGOs is needed to form these community structures. UNICEF and other such organisations will then withdraw as facilitators of government-NGO partnerships. Ultimately, NGOs and government can also withdraw as the community takes on the responsibilities of running its own services. Today we are at the first step in a long process of developing the ultimate form of partnership - one with the communities that we all are here to support and develop.

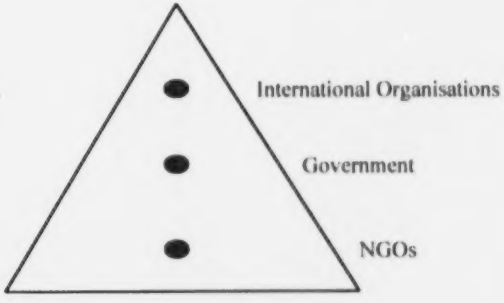

Figure 2.

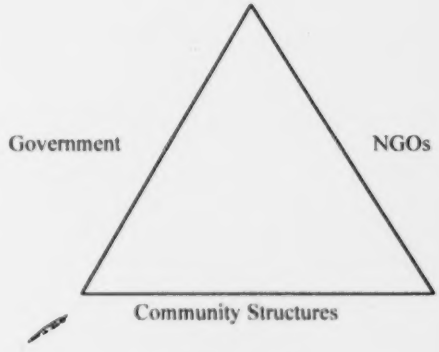

Figure 3.

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CRITICAL ISSUES IN PARTNERSHIP

Keynote Address
Dr. Adarsh Sharma
Additional Director
National Institute of Public
Co-operation and Child Development

In most societies, the care and nurturing of children traditionally rested in the private domain of the family. Parents, immediate family members and kin were expected to protect, rear, educate and shape the attitudes, values and hopes of their young ones. The involvement and participation of extra-familial institutions in child care was limited only to situations of crisis or in the event of dysfunctional behaviour of the family. It has been a time-honoured belief in our culture that the child is a gift from the gods, a gift that must be treasured with affection. Child care always allowed for prolonged interaction between the growing child and multiple caregivers from the extended family and community. Warm and permissive nurturing characterised the socialisation process during the formative years. The ambience of love, security and indulgence facilitated the acquisition of social, psychological and occupational competencies required for taking adult roles in the society.

The contemporary scenario presents a harsh shift in the concern of the family for its children, and it is common to find them in pitiable conditions. One often sees children abandoned, children deprived of their basic needs of adequate nutrition, health care and education, street children - begging, uncared for, battered and abused. The plight of the girl child in particular is deplorable; she is discriminated against at all stages of her life and is often denied even the right to survive, grow and develop.

This apathy has several antecedents, such as industrialisation, deterioration of economic conditions, perpetuation of economic exploitation, urbanisation and broadening of socio-economic inequalities in society. Women have been forced to

abandon the traditional work pattern both in agrarian and industrialised economies and have to remain away from home on work for long hours. Poverty denies the poor their basic needs and creates an environment that impedes development. Poor families in their struggle for existence have become unmindful of the needs of their children. Further, in the absence of the buffers of the joint family system and the community, the families are characterised by disorientation, uncertainty and disequilibrium. The older siblings have to look after the younger siblings and virtually lose out on their own childhood and other opportunities of learning, education and development. The synergy of the various facets of poverty has placed young children in particular "at risk." As a result of erosion in child care, the well-being of children is threatened by high infant mortality, high morbidity, low retention in school and poor physical, nutritional and educational status. In order to cope with such problems, almost all countries have recognised the need for establishing extra-familial institutions to intervene in child care.

Intervention in Child Care

Intervention in social parlance implies controlling and reducing identified risk factors/disadvantaged conditions in the environment to break the cycle of failure and despair (Krapp and Shields, 1990. pp. 751). In the context of child care, an intervention strategy would include the provision of services that compensate for missed opportunities and enhance the quality of experiences essential for holistic development. Based on this rationale, numerous programmes have been launched by state governments and voluntary agencies. These programmes vary in content, design, implementation and scale of operation, depending upon the needs of the children in varied cultures.

A Historical Perspective

Care of children outside the family and kin groups can be traced back to the earlier part of the century. However, this emerged more as a charitable and piecemeal sporadic measure, because of its problem approach to tackle emergencies that victimised children. These efforts followed the reformist movement and resulted in the establishment of some well-known voluntary organisations: Balankanji Bari, Nutan Balshikshan Sangh, Guild of Services, Gandhi Memorial Trust. Associated with all these efforts were personalities like Giju Bhai Badhekar, Tara Bai Modak, Arundale, Jugat Ram Dave, Nanabhai Bhatt and Mahatma Gandhi. These figures should be recognised for their role in pioneering the movement for child welfare through voluntary action much before the government entered the arena. However, the intentions of these efforts were humble and the scope of their activities limited both in convergence and comprehensiveness.

The post-Independence era initiated systematic attention to tackle the neglect which was taking root in child care. The Constitution of India made special provision for the care, protection and prevention of exploitation of children (Articles 24, 39e&f, 45). The laying down of Directive Principles was indicative of the acceptance of the situation that the family was increasingly unable to provide the needed care and nurturance of children, thereby making it imperative for the government to intervene.

New Efforts

The fifties marked the onset of a more systematic evolution of child care and welfare services. The government opted to place its confidence in the family to take care of their charges with voluntary agencies substituting wherever necessary.

The state also recognised that as compared to government machinery, voluntary agencies exhibited the desired dedication, flexibility and rapport required for functioning closely with families and children. It was more strategic at that stage to strengthen the existing voluntary efforts instead of setting up of new governmental services. Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) was set up in 1953 with this objective, and it was expected to reach far-flung rural areas through the aegis of non-governmental groups. CSWB was aptly described by Tara Ali Baig as "a unique example of government financing of what is virtually a non-governmental service operation on a large scale" (Baig, 1979. pp. 54). The CSWB board disbursed grant-in-aid to initiate programmes like Welfare Extension Projects, innovative programmes such as Holiday Homes and Balwadis, Creches, etc. It was an important watershed that some voluntary agencies working at the time in the country decided to join hands and formed a centralised unit which was called Indian Council for Child Welfare (ICCW). It harnessed voluntary agencies and ensured wider outreach to children. It gradually set up state councils and till today ICCW is the single largest NGO in the area of child welfare in the country.

The government's positive attitude towards voluntary efforts was once again reflected in the First Five Year Plan which recognised the potential role of the Council: "ICCW needs to be encouraged and strengthened. It should be made representative of children's organisations in the country." (Government of India, 1951). Consistent and steady increase in budgetary allocations for child development programmes were a testimony to enhanced participation of both the states and the Centre in taking care of the welfare of the young through programmes implemented in government and voluntary sectors. These programmes covered health, nutrition and education aspects. However, the developments during 1950 - 60 were haphazard, sporadic and lacked co-ordination.

The Committee on Child Care (1961-62) laid down some basic tenets of child care, recommending the need for a national policy as well as the setting up of Balwadis in rural areas. Kothari Commission (1966) also provided a much needed fillip to early childhood education. Despite all these developments, the family approach still dominated the service model of various programmes. Improving mothering skills seemed the focus of attention, and the needs of children in the area of health, nutrition were dove-tailed with parent education. The services were fragmented and lacked co-ordination. The high-powered committee headed by Shri. Gangasaran Sinha prepared an approach strategy for child welfare which led to the proclamation of the National Policy for Children, formulation of a long-term perspective of child welfare and introduction of an integrated approach to child welfare.

The National Policy for Children (1974) is founded on the conviction that all children must be given equal opportunities for holistic development in an integrated manner. It gave birth to a programme called Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), initially launched in 33 blocks on 2nd October, 1975 on an experimental basis. ICDS presently is the world's largest unique out-reach programme of early child care and development which caters to the development of children under the age of six and aims at strengthening the capacities of caregivers and communities at the grassroots. Today it reaches 3.8 million expectant and nursing mothers and 17.8 million children in 300,000 Anganwadi Centres (AWCs).

The National Institute of Public Co-operation and Child Development (NIPCCD) was designated as an apex body for training functionaries of ICDS. It imparts training through Middle-Level Training Centres and Anganwadi Training Centres identified all over India. Anganwadi workers (AWW), a grassroots level functionary, and supervisors receive training at centres mostly run by voluntary agencies. This is one of the finest examples of government/NGO partnership for training ICDS functionaries. The story of partnership in training will be incomplete without a mention about the contribution of NIPCCD in training child care workers of voluntary sectors. The country has a vast network of training centres run by voluntary agencies which meet the training needs of the personnel of several other government and NGO programmes.

The Present Scenario

An important landmark of the eighties was the establishment of the Department of Women and Child Development under the Ministry of Human Resource Development in 1985. The Department in its nodal capacity formulates plans, policies and programmes, enacts/amends legislation and co-ordinates efforts of both government and

non-governmental organisations working in the area of women and children. The Department has several noteworthy schemes: Early Childhood Education, Creches/Day Care Centres for Children of Working and Ailing Mothers, Balsevika Training (BST) and Balwadi Nutrition Programme (BNP) which involve providing financial assistance to voluntary/non-governmental agencies for meeting child care needs. The CSWB also functions under its wing and promotes participation of voluntary agencies in the area of women and child development through its schemes. The New Education Policy (1986) emphasised the role of pre-school education in creating an environment for learning. The envisaged approach in the policy for early childhood learning was akin to that adopted in the ICDS programme. It was, therefore, recommended that wherever possible these two programmes be dove-tailed. ICDS thus came to be recognised as the mainstay for Early Childhood Care and Education in the country. The trend has persisted and varied programmes of ECCE are being brought under one common umbrella of the ICDS programme in a phased manner.

Broadening Horizons

The attention being given to child care in the national planning process has been further promoted in the Eighth Five Year Plan with its emphasis on "human development." Shramshakti, the report of the National Commission on Self Employed Women (1988) made a strong plea for a national network of child care services for poor working women numbering over 15 crores. It eventually led to the emergence of FORCES (Forum for Creches and Child Care Services) which acts as a pressure group for the government to expand child care services and also ensures implementation of mechanism of labour laws and planning of diversified flexible programmes for child care under programmes of various ministries and departments.

Global developments like the Convention for the Rights of the Child (1989), the World Summit for Children (1990) and the World Conference on Education for All (1992) have provided India with an extraordinary opportunity to review and reconsider its strategies of child care. Being a signatory to the World Declaration, India has firmly reaffirmed its commitment to advance the cause of children through the formulation of a National Plan of Action (NPA) for children which sets out quantifiable time dimensions in meeting survival and developmental needs of children. NPA aspires to seek widespread community participation and encourages advocacy for survival and development of the child, both by state and voluntary sectors. It envisages an active role by NGOs in achievement of the decadal goals. Creation of a consultative and co-ordinating mechanism among the NGOs to strengthen their functioning has also been proposed

under NPA. In order to make goals and objectives of the plan more need-based and area-specific, the Department of Women and Child Development has urged state governments to prepare Plans of Action for their respective states which take into account regional disparities that may exist.

To encourage voluntary action and cater to the needs of child care, the Department of Women and Child Development took the laudable initiative in March 1994 of setting up the National Creche Fund with an initial contribution of Rs. 19.9 crores. The objects of the Fund are to give financial assistance to voluntary agencies, Mahila Mandals and state governments to open creches in rural and urban slums as support services to women employed in income-generating programmes like STEP. It will also be used to attach creches to AW centres and organise training and other activities. Four hundred and fifty creches and 150 AW-cum-creches were opened during 1994-95.

Challenges in Child Care

Providing child care to over 150 million children (0-6 years) is a stupendous task and a challenge which the government has been trying to meet. There are currently over 130 programmes of various departments and ministries which are targeted at welfare of women and children. Besides these, there are several schemes which solicit participation of voluntary agencies in the upliftment of women and children. The strategy is to provide preventive services to reduce long-term costs and remedial measures which would be incurred as a result of inadequate child care. There has been a phenomenal increase in allocation of resources from Rs. 400 crores during the First Five Year Plan to Rs. 24,000 crores in the Eighth Plan towards social sectors. However, higher financial allocations have not succeeded in yielding the desired results. Better co-ordination, convergence and linkages amongst departments is being attempted to optimally utilise resources and improve service delivery.

Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY) is a new approach mooted by the Department of Women and Child Development which proposes to bring about integration in various schemes and programmes meant to safeguard the interests of women. Its mechanism involves mobilisation and participation of women in planning an integrated delivery system of services. Indira Mahila Kendras will be set up at grass roots to operationalise the concept with the support of existing NGOs.

Future Thrust

The account given in the foregoing sections clearly illustrates that the government is committed both politically and socially to the welfare of children. What is perhaps required at this stage is the need to make concerted efforts to devise new strategies while strengthening the existing ones to

focus on planning process, to reformulate the priorities and approaches of the service delivery system, and above all, to forge ahead with new partnership between government and voluntary sector. The 73rd Amendment of Constitution in 1992 included devolution of powers to Panchayats and local bodies and has offered new opportunities to make micro-planning a reality. The Voluntary Action Co-ordination Cell (VAC Cell) set up in the Planning Commission is another positive step towards promoting people's participation in their own development. The main purpose of the cell is to devise mechanisms of enhancing collaborative arrangements and partnership with existing non-governmental organisations.

Partnership in Child Care

Non-governmental organisations have emerged in the last quarter of the century as an important "third sector" playing a key role in the social development of the country. This has helped in sharing the burden of government expenditure as NGOs not only mobilise their own resources but also mobilise resources from the communities. The NGOs have demonstrated some successful innovative methodologies in meeting the child care needs among diverse communities and exhibited unique flexibility in service delivery models. Some such experiments in the area of child care by Mobile Creches, Ruchika Platform School, VIHAN, SEWA-Rural, Urmul, Alarippu, Butterflies, and Ankur are worth mentioning.

New-found recognition from the government has created an identity crisis for many NGOs. Some of them were contented and happy in doing exemplary work at micro-level following the true spirit of voluntarism. The availability of government assistance has worked as a bait, raising ambitions of many, leading to turmoil in their functioning and operational styles.

The strait-jacket approach associated with several schemes of financial assistance has proved fatal for NGOs innovative and flexible implementation model while increasing dependence on donors. Such an impact raises a very fundamental issue and question: if the efforts for providing financial assistance to NGOs is at all conducive to the objective of promoting people's participation. It can also be construed that the government instead of doing its own work is passing the buck to voluntary agencies. Further such a "move relates to government wanting to privatise its official functioning .... under the guise of involving people the Government can cut back on its promised programmes of health, education, rehabilitation etc. because these are expected to be tackled by the voluntary sector." (Sethi, p. 19).

The Seventh Plan's chapter on voluntary agencies enumerates the activities

envisaged to be taken up by voluntary agencies. If analysed critically, it reflects the above contention. It appears that NGOs are being involved to make things easier for government's machinery. Some of the illustrative extracts are:

- To supplement government's efforts.
- To reach large number with limited resources, reducing overheads and by augmenting community participation.
- To activate delivery system and respond to the felt needs of the people.
- To make communities self-reliant.
- To train grassroots workers and professionalise voluntarism.
- To mobilise, organise and generate awareness in order to demand quality services and impose a community system of accountability.

Further, it also dictates terms of operation and states that voluntary agencies should be in a position to meet the basic requirements of government in terms of accountability. As is apparent, the approach of the government is unilateral, bureaucratic and dictating.

As things exist today the relationship between the government and voluntary organisations generally does not go beyond that of "giver and taker." There are apprehensions, mistrust and suspicion on both sides. NGOs complain of the non-receipt of deserved appreciation from the government for doing good work. The government tends to have an authoritarian control which is close to the "hard control" described by Schuttert (1989). This is characterised by one-way orders from the state machinery, whereas "soft control" is based on the principle of co-operation and is more conducive to partnership relationship. In the recent past some of the steps taken by the government to control NGO interaction such as setting up of the Statutory National Council of Voluntary Organisations, formulation of a code of conduct, mooting of unsupportive income tax laws (35 CC-35 CCA) have not been very favourable moves for soliciting partnership with NGOs.

The government and NGOs cannot replace or substitute for each other, but their complementary and supplementary roles hold promise for changing the profile of society and achieving equity and social justice.

Despite these misgivings and estranged terms and conditions of interaction, many NGOs nurture the desire to undertake government-funded projects. Such an aspiration has several explanations. Association with government improves credibility, is likely to open further opportunities of receiving funds from other

organisations and helps build infrastructure, facilities and assets.

NGOs have complex relations with the government, sometimes co-operating, at other times in conflict and often both simultaneously over different issues. NGOs involved with government in their newly-acquired roles could take "roughly three forms: some groups are likely to draw back from popular education and participatory development to focus more on the delivery of services. Others, less certain of durability of democracy, will maintain their distance from government. And a third group will probably combine its promotion of grass roots participation with attempts to work with, and influence, the government." (UNDP 1993).

NGOs have complex relations with the government, sometimes co-operating, at other times in conflict and often both simultaneously over different issues.

The ICDS Experience

ICDS is an integrated package of services. In the future, most other child care programmes are expected to converge with it, making this the country's single largest programme. Consequently, the possibility of creating additional partnership between NGOs and government in child care services can be best illustrated by reviewing the example of ICDS.

Paragraph 35 of the ICDS Scheme (revised 1982), while delineating the functional responsibilities of various departments and agencies, mentions that the Central Social Welfare Board, voluntary organisations, local bodies, Panchayati Raj Institutions and others are to be actively involved in the ICDS programme, specifically to assist with implementation and solicit community participation. The intention is to entrust the running of anganwadis to voluntary organisations, local bodies, Panchayati Raj Institutions and others where these are functioning efficiently, and give them grant-in-aid on the basis of the pattern approved for funding the anganwadis.

In pursuance of this provision the letter dated 1 August 1975, from the then Department of Social Welfare says "... As far as possible the anganwadies should be run by voluntary organisations ..."

Subsequently, in its letter dated 22 October 1986, the Department of Women and Child Development draws the attention of state governments to the need for entrusting the whole or part of the ICDS programme to the appropriate voluntary organisations. Furthermore, the letter recommends that action be taken to that end.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play an important role in effective delivery of social services to the masses. Recognising this fact, greater and effective involvement of NGOs has been attempted through exclusively earmarking new ICDS projects for implementation by NGOs. The present status of ICDS implemented by NGOs is presented in the table below.

Gujarat has taken a lead in assigning voluntary organisations to implementation of ICDS projects. It may, however, be mentioned that either the entire project is entrusted to a voluntary organisation, or a part of the project is handed-over, and in some other cases, a number of voluntary organisations are assigned anganwadi centres of the same project.

In the following 17 states and 7 Union Territories, no voluntary organisations have undertaken ICDS projects:

Arunachal Pradesh
Andaman & Nicobar Islands
Bihar
Chandigarh
D & N Haveli
Daman & Diu
Delhi
Goa
Haryana
Himachal Pradesh
Karnataka
Kerala
Lakshadweep
Maharashtra
Manipur
Meghalaya
Mizoram
Nagaland
Pondicherry
Punjab
Sikkim
Tamil Nadu
Tripura
Uttar Pradesh

ICDS Projects Implemented by Voluntary Organisations

State	Number of Voluntary Orgs.	Number of Projects	Number of AWCs
Andhra Pradesh	1	1	100
Assam	27	27	337
Gujarat	28	7	1527
Madhya Pradesh	4	4	363
Orissa	1	1	34
Rajasthan	1	1	113
West Bengal	1	1	120
Total	**63**	**42**	**2594**

Some of the major organisations implementing ICDS include:

- Rayalaseema Seva Samithi, Tirupati.
- All India Red Cross Society, Rajkot.
- Bansali Trust, Banaskantha.
- Gujarat Kalavani Trust, Ahmedabad Gandhi Ashram Zila, Mehesana.
- Chattisgarh Netra Chikitsa Samiti, Rajpur.
- Bal Niketan Sangh, Indore.
- Rama Krishna Ashram, Narayanpur District, Bastar.
- Urmul Rural Health Research and Development Trust, Bikaner District.
- Rama Krishna Mission Loka Siksha Parishad, Narendrapur, West Bengal.

NIPCCD conducted a research study to understand the differences in implementation of ICDS by government and voluntary organisations, to identify the reasons for these differences and to study the possible patterns of partnership between these two sectors.

The Differences

The study revealed that the success of a developmental programme rests on the motivation, dedication, commitment and missionary zeal of the functionaries, who have innate qualities to relate themselves with the problems of people and have potential to lead and direct the community. These qualities need to be fostered among functionaries or ensured at the time of their recruitment. The study states that voluntary organisations are in a position to foster these qualities among the functionaries of their organisation to a large extent. Further, delegation of power and responsibility resulted in decentralisation of power among the functionaries. Also, flexibility in operation enabled the organisation to respond to the felt needs of the community. Functional and less rigid authority lines and emphasis on achievement of results characterised the voluntary initiatives to implement ICDS. However, these often did not hold true for government-run ICDS programmes. In programme implementation by government, the role, responsibility and even the goals are predetermined and, thus, hinder conversion of the anganwadi centres into focal points for innovation. These findings offer a few important conclusions and lessons. Such comparative studies can promote improved NGO-government relationships by identifying critical strategies for wider replication.

In a workshop organised by NIPCCD in 1988, the observations of the participants provided an insight into the prerequisites for sustained partnership between government and NGOs, as well as for better performance by voluntary organisations. These include entrusting a full block of ICDS programmes to a single, suitable voluntary organisation. This approach may minimise problems of supervision and management while mitigating administrative and operational problems.

Co-ordination between functionaries of government agencies and voluntary organisations should be strengthened. Voluntary organisations entrusted with the responsibility of implementing ICDS projects should have adequate infrastructure facilities and experience of working in the field of women and child development.

A New Approach to Partnership

Reciprocal interaction is the essence of partnership. In the context of NGO and government partnership, one must see if both sectors are doing enough to facilitate this process. At this juncture, a few characteristics of effective partnership may be pointed out:

1. Partnership should be based on principles of equality and mutual appreciation of each others' roles.

2. Responsibility, or even authority if need be, should be fairly shared.

3. The involvement of both partners in formulation of policies and implementation should be done in a democratic manner.

4. The concept of accountability should be a two-way process applicable to both partners, not only for fiscal targets, but also for the roles and responsibilities discharged. Adequate feedback should be taken on the quality of services and the processes and methods involved in empowering communities.

5. There should be frequent opportunities of exchange between the officials from the NGO and government. Such exchange may have to be made obligatory and structured so as to be meaningful for establishing mutual understanding.

6. Relevant information should be documented in a user-friendly manner. One possibility is a database on NGOs and their diverse activities, as well as including information on the various departments of the government having child care components. In addition, effective ways and means need to be adopted for disseminating the information to all partners to enable them take administrative and policy decisions judiciously.

7. Participatory methods should be encouraged in programme planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The process of decision-making should include concerned NGOs, government functionaries and community representatives. Cultivation of dialogue and listening skills is imperative, particularly for the middle-level supervisory staff of NGOs and the government functionaries involved in programme oversight, management and administration.

8. Understanding of power relationships within NGOs, government and community-level groups is imperative to promote both partnership and smooth implementation of delivery systems. Attempts should be made to constantly pursue optimal balance between concentration and decentralisation of power and between participation and authority.

9. In order to achieve desired partnership and effective co-operation, NGOs must make linkages with other NGOs. The government should also evolve a system of networking at the national level. We have examples in our country of various networks of NGOs at the regional level - Federation of Voluntary Organisations of Karnataka and TN - FORCES by the ACCESS Project. Networking is a core activity of any collaborative or partnership work. It helps in information sharing, capacity building and strategising joint activities. Shishu Vikas Pracheta is another example of networking between NGOs and government in West Bengal, set up in 1985 with a view to bringing training centres of ICDS functionaries under one umbrella for closer co-operation and mutual understanding.

   The need for a well-planned NGO networking system at a national level has been long felt. With this in view the Department of Women and Child Development has set up a NGO Cell at NIPCCD. The Cell is working to extend outreach of networking, set up a database, act as a clearing house and document innovative intervention experiences of selected organisations. A participatory methodology is being used to carry out activities. A consultative meeting of NGOs was held during the last week of October 1995 in Delhi. The Cell brings out a letter called "Sampark." These efforts are likely to have a positive impact on policy formulation and achievement of goals.

10. Clear cut norms and criteria need to be worked out for selection of voluntary organisations eligible for collaboration. The selection process should be decentralised and should incorporate rigorous and foolproof systems to check corrupt practices associated with provision of financial assistance to voluntary organisations. Performance audits should take precedence over fiscal audits. NGOs with expertise in evaluation and operational research may be identified to perform this task.

It may be concluded that the process of social reconstruction requires the joint efforts of government and NGOs. While neither can replace or substitute for the other, their complementary and supplementary roles hold promise for changing the profile of society and achieving equity and social justice.

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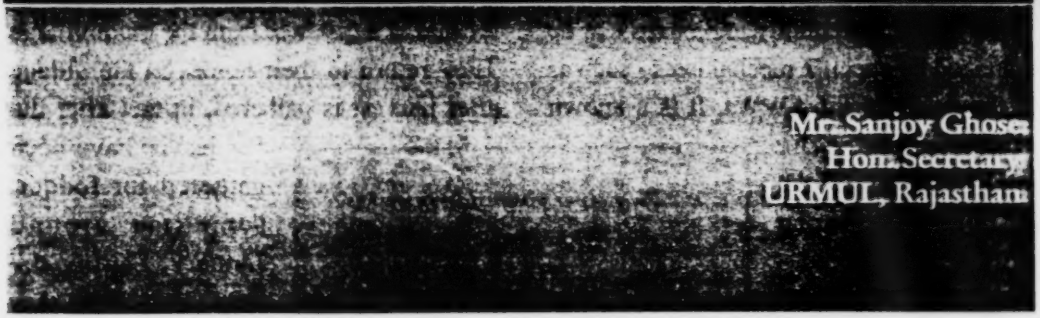
CHILD CARE - THE URMUL EXPERIENCE



Mr. Sanjoy Ghose
Hon. Secretary
URMUL, Rajasthan

URMUL is a voluntary agency working with communities in the Thar desert areas of Rajasthan. Details about the work of URMUL and the specific experience with the implementation of ICDS has been documented elsewhere. This paper briefly examines some of the conceptual issues of collaboration, and offers some specific suggestions to make such arrangements more effective in the future.

Trust

The first prerequisite for any collaborative relationship should be a foundation of trust. Systems within government are often structured on the assumption that the agency they are dealing with-whether it is their own employees, "beneficiaries," or intermediary NGOs-are dishonest, and seek to exploit the benefits of the government system. As a result of this, systems are developed to "supervise, monitor, inspect, check" rather than "understand." Managerially, this may be appropriate where the cause and effect relationship is direct, and quantifiable.

Design for Partnership

For instance, if we are using a particular process to manufacture supplementary food, we know that with a specific combination of inputs, subject to controlled conditions, the output would be predictable. However, if we try and superimpose that kind of management system on what are largely qualitative relationships - like how an anganwadi worker (AWW) relates to the community, or even to the helper, or the children - we are in a black box where environment, initial conditions, attitudes, values and other variables can make a difference. This would help explain the differential impact of the same training on individual AWWs and the

different responses of communities to the same package.

Some of the uncertainty and chaos can be managed by specific mechanisms - such as in the selection of AWWs. It is a known problem in the implementation of the ICDS. Once the wrong worker is selected - usually the relative of some power broker in the village, for whom this is an opportunity to earn and divert foodstuffs without any accountability- the initial conditions make it difficult to bring about attitudinal changes. URMUL can now confidently claim to have franchised a selection process where the norms are so open and transparent that this kind of misuse rarely occurs. Even in an area where rural female literacy is less than 2%, having a public selection, which is both widely advertised and attended and is made jointly by outsiders and the village, has made a difference.

The first prerequisite for any relationship between government and NGOs should be a foundation of trust.

The following example demonstrates the negative impacts of a lack of trust between implementing agencies. URMUL implements the ICDS programme in Kolayat Tehsil of Bikaner district in Rajasthan. Although villages in Kolayat are nuclear, they have a pattern of settlement dating back to a time when the primary occupation of people was pastoralism, and not settled agriculture. A peculiar feature of this settlement pattern is that during the rains, people migrate with their families to their *dhanis* (hamlets), which are often located at a distance from the main village They return to their homes in the village after harvest is gathered, in fact after the *ber* leaves have been gathered for fodder, sometime around January. During the time that they are away, some families make arrangements to leave their school-age children in the village, with elders to take care of them. Frequently children are boarded with their grandparents almost for all of their initial schooling years. However with preschool children, children less than two years old, this is not possible and the children move with the mother, who with the eldest daughter, manages the child care responsibilities in the *dhani* itself.

During a good monsoon the attendance of children drops dramatically. Some of the centres have to be closed, because virtually the entire village moves out. The first time that this happened, and centres were closed, URMUL received a "show cause" notice from the state government. When the situation was explained, it was met with incredulity. "Do you mean this is the only part of the state where people migrate to their fields? Why have not any of the other centres ever closed?" And automatically, the "number" of centres becomes the

benchmark against which work is measured. Quality of service, or involvement of the local community in planning and managing the programme, count for nothing. If instead there had been empathy and interest on the government side, it may have been possible to work out alternative models based on these special circumstances.

Flexibility

The second point, which is related to trust, is the need for flexibility. Although we had negotiated for a different staffing pattern for ICDS than was being practised, after the first instalment, further releases of funds have not permitted any deviation from the norms. Is it realistic to have the same kind of staffing pattern for the entire country? In Kolayat, we had suggested - and now operate at our own expense a system in which there is an intermediate tier between the supervisor and the AWW. We call these people "village level workers," and they have responsibility for between 3 - 5 centres each. They are educated (8 - 10 years of formal schooling) and are from the area. They are required because the centres are so far apart and are difficult to reach. Having a local presence keeps us in touch on a day-to-day basis. In addition, most of the AWWs are semi-literate, and accounting and record-keeping take up a large part of their time. Having assistance close by allows them to spend more time on the creative rather than on administrative functions. This system has been working well, but we have been unable to get expenses reimbursed despite a written agreement with the state government.

In the transport of food grains, between purchase and consumption, some grain does get wasted, however efficient the process may be. In URMUL, we have worked out that the losses amount to approximately 4% of the grain procured. When you add up the losses that result from feeding 8000 beneficiaries daily, the amount is substantial. Yet this money cannot be recovered from government, because norms do not permit.

Another small example. In the MPR that the organisation sends to the government there is a column for "number of children attended more than 15 days." The reimbursement for food is calculated on the basis of this figure. As a result, all the actual expense on feeding of children who for one reason or another could not attend fifteen days has to be borne by the organisation.

The easy way out of all these problems is simply to "adjust" the muster roll of children attending. Simply by marking a larger number present than actually attend, it is possible to mop up all these theoretical defects. But then that opens up the worker - and the entire organisation - to reap the fruits of such compromises. As an aside, the same problem exists at a systemic level with Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, where the

material labour ratios of 30:70 are so unrealistic that junior engineers, BDOs and Collectors falsify the muster rolls to claim their share.

As the privatisation of ICDS proceeds, voluntary organisations that lack funds will be unwilling to run such programmes.

Strengthening Participation

More serious than this however is the lack of investment on what could broadly be defined as participation-strengthening activities. In URMUL we have always looked at ICDS as a means of community self-reliance, rather than dependence. We have involved people in managing the programme in the hope that even if the government programme is phased out, there will be enough local initiative to carry forward the idea of social responsibility towards children.

This is much more complex than it sounds, because although we are dealing with fairly homogenous and close communities, we also have to contend with attitudes towards caste (higher caste not accepting food for their children from low-caste helpers), notions of charity and patronage (many communities would not participate if they felt that they were being supported), intra-family household distribution, status of women and girl children; and of course the politics of governance at local level. All this means that a lot of time and effort has to be spent on understanding the village and preparing the community to develop trust.

We spent two months literally walking around villages with an improvised street play and songs to make people aware of the fact that ICDS was a programme that they could take on as a matter of right. After that, we set up ICDS committees, in consultation with the local women's group and the Panchayat, at a general meeting of the entire village. We then called the committee members to our headquarters at Bajju and went through an intense two-day workshop, examining rights and responsibilities, and facilitating a sense of ownership. Once the AWWs were selected, we organised a similar one-week residential programme, to get to know them, and introduce them to the URMUL way of work.

All these are what we would consider essential parts of the software of the ICDS. However the government has failed to reimburse us for these programmes.

Integration

The last point to touch on is the possibilities of integration. ICDS was an "add-on" programme for URMUL, which was already working in different areas. It took efforts to integrate the development areas such as income generation, and women's development activities into ICDS. This has strengthened the programme, and added incentives. In some cases, where the ICDS

workers were relatively well-educated (8th class), they also became the resource persons for an intervention with adolescent girls, linking income-generating skills with functional literacy. This also made it possible for the women who were involved to earn a full living wage. This kind of approach, looking at ICDS within a larger vision of women's development and child care, is useful in programme planning.

On the 10th of October, the Regional Deputy Director of the Department of Women and Children at Char came to Bajju to attend a training programme being organised by URMUL for ICDS functionaries. He refused to accept that the AWWs were doing their jobs honestly, and ridiculed them, referring them in the derogatory *tu*, rather *aap*. How much do they give you for *nashta*, he asks them. When one replies, *pakoras* today, he says, one or two? By the time the hour-long grilling is over - not a word of appreciation, or gratitude - the workers are restless. When they hear that URMUL is contemplating handing back the programme to the government, they all speak in unison; give the programme to the *sarkar*, and we quit. In an age when working for government is the ultimate aim of every half-educated village youth, that speaks for itself.

We have involved people in managing the ICDS programme in the hope that even if the government programme is phased out, there will be enough local initiative to carry forward the idea of a social responsibility for children.

CHILD CARE - THE RASS EXPERIENCE

Dr. G. Munirathnam
Hon. General Secretary
Rayalaseema Seva Samithi

Introduction

Established in 1981, the Rayalaseema Seva Samithi (RASS) has been implementing the following programmes in the Rayalaseema district of Andhra Pradesh:

- Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme in the Tirupati urban area, covering 14,500 children as well as pregnant and lactating mothers.
- Early Childhood Education (ECE) centres with an enrolment of 20,000 children from 600 villages in 4 districts.
- Day care centres or creches with a current coverage of 9000 children in 300 villages of Chittoor and Cuddapah districts.
- Child sponsorship programme covering 6000 children in Chittoor district.

Despite certain persistent problems, RASS has been able to implement its child development programmes successfully. In recognition of this, RASS was awarded the National Award for outstanding contribution to child welfare. The Government of Andhra Pradesh has conferred the "Bala Bandhu Award" on me for my contribution to child development.

But we are not oblivious of the problems we continue to face in the implementation of child development programmes. Most of these problems arise out of the present system of relationship with the government and its agencies. I will briefly discuss the most important of these problems.

Design for Partnership

ICDS

Frequent delays in the supply of preventive vaccines arise because vaccines supplied by the state government are routed through the District Medical and Health office. The experience of RASS

suggests that the delays can be avoided or minimised if the NGOs implementing ICDS are directly supplied the vaccines and other child care materials.

The meagre provision of rent for housing anganwadi centres (AWC) has made it difficult to house the AWC in a good environment. The location of the AWC in a clean, centrally located area is an essential prerequisite for attracting target mothers and children. Further, in the urban community, support for the location of AWCs in good areas would be difficult to enlist unless ward committees are established to help the NGOs.

Three factors were found to be adversely affecting the delivery of ICDS services as well as the mobilisation and participation of mothers and children. These include out-migration, quality of supplementary nutrition and illiteracy. While the programme is not able to influence migration directly, we have been able to improve the quality of supplementary nutrition. Our approach has been to make food more appealing to the local palate at only marginally higher cost. The supplementary food is cooked like local *uppuma* by mixing vegetables and condiments. This was made possible with support from CARE.

To further address these problems relating to mobilisation and community participation, we have implemented a number of other programmes in the ICDS benefit area, including :

- Adult education programmes.
- Non-formal education programmes for school drop-outs.
- Organisation of women's saving, credit and self-help groups.
- Training programmes for ICDS mothers/ family members in tailoring, photo lamination, bead making, garment making, wig making.
- Construction of community assets such as borewells, low-cost housing, waste water drains, avenue plantation, low-cost latrines, smokeless chulas, kitchen gardens.
- Supplying additional play materials to the preschools as well as free school uniforms to the needy children under the child sponsorship programme.
- Provision of a full-fledged family welfare centre with 4 sub-centres in the ICDS project area, which apart from providing family welfare services, provides certain medical services to the ICDS mothers/families including the ICDS children.

Besides, RASS has been providing certain special services to the disabled children in the ICDS project area. These special services include special education for the impaired, surgical correction for the disabled, vocational training courses and community-based rehabilitation programme for the disabled children, and group organisation of beneficiaries.

Despite the additional services provided to reinforce the effectiveness of ICDS, we still encounter several formidable problems in the delivery of ICDS services

Lack of co-ordination between government and NGOs in the delivery of immunisation services is a problem which results in overlapping coverage of certain areas and the neglect of others. For example, in our ICDS Project area, the medical college, municipality and women's hospital simultaneously provide immunisation services without any co-ordination.

The poor salary and non-salary working conditions of our ICDS staff vis-à-vis the conditions of staff in ICDS projects run by the government affect the motivation, commitment and effectiveness of ICDS staff under NGOs. It is therefore, essential to extend all service benefits such as PF, and gratuity to ICDS staff under NGOs.

The concept of "community centre" which can become the focal point for the provision of all child development services is absolutely essential to overcome the problems of duplication, overlapping coverage and to minimise expenditure on overheads.

Early Childhood Education (ECE)

Our experience in implementing ECE during the last 14 years reveals that this programme would be more effective if provision for supplementary nutrition or midday meal is provided, in addition to adequate medical assistance. To overcome this problem at least partly, RASS has grouped 20 centres into clusters led by one Medical Officer. This officer provides basic medical and health services and co-ordinates with the primary health centres. The other problem we face in ECE is lack of adequate accommodation for housing the centres. Insistence on the provision of free accommodation by the community does not get a good response. We therefore feel that some provision should be made for allocation of funds for the propose of rent. Further, the salary of Rs. 300 for the teacher of the centre attracts only teachers of lower quality and commitment.

The problems of drop-outs and irregular attendance can be tackled if provision is made in the funding support for midday meal/supplementary nutrition. Further, the effectiveness of the programme is also affected by the administrative staff available to co-operate and supervise the centre. Our experience indicates that there should a larger provision for administrative staff.

Frequent delays in the release of grants and the system of compulsory annual renewal of the programme run by NGOs is an

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important problem affecting the quality of ECE services. We strongly feel that the system of yearly renewal should be dispensed with at least for NGOs with proven track records. Alternatively, renewal may be compulsory once in three years. Further, it is desirable to ensure the timely release of grants to ensure smooth operations. It is also desirable to provide additional grants to encourage trained teachers to work in ECEs. A part of the JRY funds may be earmarked for construction of ECE/community centres. At present, the local panchayats/municipalities do not effectively participate in advising or supervising the work of ECEs. ECEs should be answerable to local bodies to ensure the effective delivery of services.

Creches

Our experience in the running of 300 creches has shown a need for funds for supplementary nutrition. There is also a need for grants for locating the centre in hygienic places which would attract children. The provision for medical assistance to creche children, dispensed with recently, affects the programme. Alternatively, a full-time doctor may be provided for a cluster of 20 centres. Our experience also suggests that the 10 per cent matching contribution required from NGOs is a difficulty.

To make the creche programme more effective, it needs to be linked with programmes such as IRDP, housing, sanitation and IGP, aimed at the socio-economic development of families. There is also need to increase the role of creches and ECEs in promoting child welfare.

Child Sponsorship Programme

In order to overcome certain deficiencies in ICDS, ECE and creche programmes, we have undertaken child sponsorship programme, covering 6000 children and their families with international funding support. The core of the programme is child-centred, family-based and community-oriented approach. Under the programme, supplementary nutrition, health and medical assistance, educational support, asset base training, as well as additional income are provided in an integrated fashion. This programme reinforces the ICDS, ECE and creches.

Some General Suggestions

The need for a uniform matching contribution requirement among all child development programmes sponsored and supported by the government cannot be over-emphasised. At present, the matching conditionalities attached to different child development schemes are varied. Uniform conditionalities need to be determined.

We also feel that a minimum but uniform provision for administrative overheads should be made for all NGO-run child

development programmes. As mentioned, the system of annual renewal of child development programmes needs to be reformed, preferably with renewal once in three years with monitoring by government.

There is also need for designing and funding training programmes for ECE/creche teachers, helpers, middle-level functionaries on par with ICDS programme.

Further, since the government does not pay full salary and non-salary benefits to NGO staff, they should be exempted from the PF Act, Labour Act and Industrial Disputes Act etc. The table below demonstrates that the honoraria fixed for teachers and ayahs varies widely. This gives rise to operational problems. Therefore, honoraria should be made uniform for teachers and ayahs working in creches/ICDS/ECE.

Finally, as pointed out by several committees in the late 50s and early 60s, all the educational, health, medical and social services should be provided under one roof in villages and municipalities. The concept of "community centre" which can become the focal point for the provision of all child development services is absolutely essential to overcome the problems of duplication, overlapping coverage, expenditure on overheads. This will ensure effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation and will help promote better government and NGO interaction.

Honoraria Provided to Teachers and Ayahs in Child Care Programmes

Programme	Honoraria 1984-85 Teacher - Ayah	Honoraria 1989-90 Teacher - Ayah	Honoraria 1993-94 Teacher - Ayah
Creche Programme	175-75	300-200	500-300
ICDS Programme	175-50	275-110	400-200
ECE Programme	175-50	250-90	300-125

LITERACY - THE ARIVOLI EXPERIENCE

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As participants in Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) of Pudukkottai District, we have experienced the excitement and shared both the joy and the frustrations inherent in a campaign of this kind. For both of us, the campaign was an altogether novel experience, although each of us had earlier been associated, in different ways, with projects whose challenges were not entirely unlike those of the literacy campaign. One of us, as a member of the Indian Administrative Service, had handled large projects earlier, not only in industry, but also in women's development and the other, as an activist of people's movements. However this campaign was unusual not only because of its sheer size and complexity, but also in its breadth. Although Ernakulam district of Kerala had provided both a model and an inspiration, on the different soil of Tamil Nadu, this was a pioneering experience, as were the TLCs of Pasumpon Muthuramalingam and Kamarajar. To be sure, one had a "model," derived as the general essence of the Ernakulam campaign. That was certainly a help. However the "model" of the proposal sanctioned by the National Literacy Mission Authority (NLMA) was to be considerably modified and enriched on the ground during the actual campaign. The campaign threw up a number of important lessons. Without going into a complete and detailed assessment of the campaign and without claiming to be comprehensive, we shall share what we believe are important lessons from the project. We set out these lessons in the form of theses.

Design for Partnership

Thesis 1

Even in a non-revolutionary social milieu, it is possible to initiate and carry out, with some degree of success, a mass literacy campaign, because there exists a

tremendous reserve of innate goodness and volunteer spirit among the people. This can be catalysed despite an overwhelming ambience of cynicism, if a critical minimum core of committed activists and governmental support is present. Sustaining the process, however, is a far more difficult challenge.

There is a tremendous reserve of innate goodness and volunteer spirit among the people, which can be catalysed despite an overwhelming ambience of cyncism, if a critical minimum core of committed activists and governmental support are present.

In Pudukkottai district, when the TLC was proposed to the NLMA, there was a committed core group of twenty to thirty literacy activists. It was these activists that dared dream of making 290,000 persons literate in a district with a population of 1.32 million. The support from the National Literacy Mission and clearance from the state government, with the attendant financial assistance, constituted the critical minimum official backing that the campaign needed. However, even as the first executive committee of Pudukkottai *Arivoli Iyakkam* met on July 6, there was little more to go on. It was here that the combined efforts of the district administration and the Bharatiya Gyan Vigyan Samiti core group proved effective in catalysing massive popular support for the campaign. As we have documented elsewhere, tens of thousands of volunteers, a majority of them poor, and over two hundred thousand learners, poorer still, gave freely of their time and energies to this campaign in the following months. The human generosity the campaign was able to evoke had little to do with economic variables, but a lot to do with people's innate goodness and volunteer spirit.

However, while a committed core group in tandem with an equally committed administrative leadership, could provide the initial, catalytic impetus, sustaining the momentum proved a major challenge. Given the generally cynical environment, the abject conditions of the people's lives, and the lack of continuity of administrative leadership, this is hardly surprising.

Thesis 2

The active support of the district administration is critical to the success of a district mass literacy campaign.

A key feature of Pudukkottai's literacy campaign has been the involvement of officials at all levels, right from district down to the gram panchayat. They have also been present at all stages, from the first

committee meetings and district convention through the *jathas* and the difficult teaching-learning phase to the end of the TLC phase when the final evaluation and declaration festivals were conducted, starting from gram panchayats and culminating in the district level function. No department was left out. The Revenue, Development and Education departments were involved to a significant extent. ICDS workers were an important part of the Arivoli workforce. Even departments not directly under the District Collector and apparently unconnected with literacy like the Agriculture, Electricity and the Public Works departments were involved at some level; as were the Health, and of course the Education departments.

The Pudukkottai experience underscores, as do other TLCs, the key role of the Development, Education and Revenue departments. Not only were the development functionaries, starting with the District Collector, at every level official members of corresponding TLC committees, they were also involved in centre visits, motivating learners as well as volunteers and village committees, providing infrastructure support and helping with the management information system.

The Pudukkottai experience also suggests that, in the Indian context, the perceived as well as the actual commitment of the district's top officials is crucial to enthuse as well as prod officials at all levels to work in the campaign. With a certain proportion of officials, the involvement becomes self-sustaining and self-reinforcing. However, given the cultural milieu within which the Indian bureaucracy operates and its reward system, "relapse rates," into a non-involved conventional bureaucratic mode of behaviour, can be quite high.

Thesis 3

The involvement of women, not only as learners and volunteers, but at leadership levels, and their organisation right from district to grassroots levels, are both very important to the success of TLC.

It is a well-known fact that in practically all mass literacy campaigns across the country, women have been involved in a big way, so much so that it is often remarked that TLCs are essentially mass movements of women. However, in a large number of instances, such involvement is mostly confined to women being learners and volunteers. What was distinctive about Pudukkottai's TLC was that a very conscious effort was made from the beginning to bring women into the TLC leadership at all levels.

Over 20% of all Assistant Project Co-ordinators recruited were women. Every training camp included lectures and group discussions on gender issues. This helped sensitise the male activists to gender equity

issues and build the self-confidence of women activists The inclusion of women as leaders in this campaign simultaneously led to the accomplishment of the twin goals of literacy and women's development. The process of constituting and making effective women's committees at the district, block and sub-block levels was facilitated by the presence of full-time women convenors, one for the district as a whole and one in every block. Full-time women convenors at district and block levels charged exclusively with the task of mobilising and empowering women as part of the TLC were unique to Pudukkottai.

The TLC process and structures were also effectively linked to ongoing efforts for development of rural women, DWCRA quarry groups being an outstanding example. The resultant mobilisation of women, both learners and volunteers, in turn helped strengthen the TLC by contributing to environment-building and sustaining learners' and volunteers' morale.

Thesis 4

The success of the mass literacy campaign model which envisages district administration and non-governmental forces working together demands a strong commitment to team work and subordination of ego.

A strength of Pudukkottai's TLC was that the official/non-official interaction was nursed carefully at every stage. Ego problems inevitably arise in the TLC context where officials and non-officials work together. District level officers often resent the fact that "upstart youngsters," often several years junior to them in age and official experience, have direct access to the District Collector by virtue of being *Arivoli* district co-ordinators. These co-ordinators, who generally are volunteer social activists with experience in mobilising people, are quite unfamiliar with the way the bureaucracy works and are impatient with its pace and modalities. There is thus, at one level, the clash of different background, values and modes of functioning, between the officials and the full-time activists. There is also the question of team work, especially among the district level co-ordinators. In a campaign like the TLC, where events take place at break-neck speed, and crowd into one another, co-ordination, planning and collective thinking are both crucial and difficult. It is especially at this level that TLC demands subordination of egos and tremendous skills of human management. The weekly meetings, throughout the TLC phase, of the district and block co-ordinators, and the even more frequent meetings of the district central co-ordinators, which both the TLC chairperson and the BGVS state co-ordinator attended, helped tackle problems of both ego and lack of team work as and when they arose. This substantially contributed to sustaining the levels of motivation of the activists and to keeping

officials genuinely involved in the campaign. This class of problems was of course, not confined to the district level but occurred at every level right down to the village. However, they generally found their most acute expression at the district level, and it was also at this level that they had the most far reaching implications for the success of the campaign. Given that the TLC, for all its ultimately democratic and decentralising potential, is initially built from the district level, cohesion and smooth working relations, both between officials and co-ordinators and among co-ordinators, become crucial to the programme's success.

Thesis 5

Structural flexibility, a tight programme calendar that leaves no slack, and an enabling leadership are key elements in TLC success.

Pudukkottai's TLC had one of the tightest calendars among all TLCs, especially of those in Tamil Nadu. The project was sanctioned by the NLMA executive committee on June 28, 1991. The first meeting of the TLC executive took place on July 6, barely a week later. The district convention that officially launched the TLC took place on July 23, less than three weeks after the TLC executive met. Teaching began on October 2, hardly ten weeks from the district convention. This sort of scorching pace certainly made for very hard, practically round-the-clock work in the initial phase. Yet, far from being a negative factor, it was precisely this pace that heightened the general excitement and helped to maximise mobilisation and motivation. The extraordinary high initial enrolment - within two months of commencement of classes - of around 2.0 lakh learners out of 2.9 lakh learners identified in the survey was without parallel among TLCs. It was this initial start followed by a process of intensely packed environment-building activities that helped Pudukkottai TLC sustain a healthy and positive environment throughout, and withstand several setbacks on the way.

While the pace of the campaign was a very important contributor to Pudukkottai's success, structural flexibility was also a key factor. This flexibility is implicit in the design of the TLC model, since the idea of entrusting the TLC to a registered society (chaired by the District Collector, but not a governmental body) was precisely to avoid bureaucratic strait-jacketing. However, while such flexibility is intended and visualised in the structure of the TLC, it tends to get lost completely in most TLCs, given the general bureaucratic milieu within which the TLC takes place. Insistence on bureaucratic procedures where Collectors prefer to deal with their own subordinate officials rather than a group of non-official district TLC co-ordinators often leads to urgent TLC papers languishing in the offices of the Collector's personal assistants. This, in turn, leads to delays in

crucial decisions. Such a pattern is highly disruptive of a time-bound campaign. Fortunately, in Pudukkottai, the critical importance of structural flexibility was recognised right from the beginning, and the TLC chairperson always dealt directly and simultaneously with key officials, who were assigned clear-cut roles in the TLC, and the non-official district co-ordinators.

The third element that contributed greatly to the success of the TLC in Pudukkottai was the principle of enabling leadership practised at all levels. This is linked to the principle of flexibility in the sense that an enabling leadership must consciously allow flexibility at the next and subsequent levels.

However, there are two additional points of a specific nature to be noted. One is that where the official leadership of a TLC is concerned, this degenerates into bureaucratic fiat, given the unfamiliarity with and lack of understanding of the TLC model on the part of officials at various levels in a district. It is thus not entirely uncommon to come across an "order" issued by a district administration stating that a certain list of persons have been "appointed" as "key resource persons." Quite often, officials remain oblivious of the act that in a TLC, one does not issue orders but obtains by appropriate motivational methods the voluntary involvement of people for various responsibilities in the campaign. Similarly, in typical hierarchical fashion, "orders" would be issued for headmasters of high schools to be "key resource persons," teachers of high schools to be "resource persons" and teachers of elementary schools to be "master trainers." Truly enabling leadership, on the contrary, relies primarily on motivation, voluntarism and a non-hierarchical approach. This style of leadership was consciously cultivated in Pudukkottai TLC, not only among officials but also among co-ordinators. It should, in fact, be emphasised that bureaucratic and hierarchical attitudes are hardly the monopoly of officials. They are quite rampant among the general educated populace as well, a fact not surprising in our socio-cultural milieu.

The second specific point is that an enabling leadership should identify and encourage creativity, of which there is plenty among both literacy activists and the general population. In Pudukottai, the abundance of creativity was something the leadership discovered at the grassroots as the campaign proceeded, and having done so, was quick to identify, encourage it, and to capitalise on it. Poets emerged everywhere, local literacy committees innovated remarkably on various methods of motivating and mobilising for literacy, and young volunteer instructors and master trainers came up with their own ingenious bags of tricks to overcome hard spots in learning. *Oorkoodi*, the four page tabloid for volunteer instructors, provided an excellent vehicle to share, encourage and enhance creativity.

Thesis 6

The relationship between the Total Literacy Campaign and women's empowerment is essentially symbiotic.

In the initial stages, organising women's committees, training them in leadership roles and enhancing their mobility helped strengthen the TLC by strongly motivating women learners and volunteers. Particularly in the Post Literacy stage, women volunteers whose leadership abilities were the outcomes of the TLC process, have helped strengthen DWCRA groups and empower women further. Thus, in Pudukkottai, initially it was the massive involvement of women and organisational training provided to them, that helped carry out a large number of decentralised mobilisation campaigns which enabled the TLC to reach an extraordinarily high enrolment rate. Subsequently, the TLCs successful advance led to the emergence of a new social force, a large number of empowered women organisers and volunteers, and a significant number of very confident neo-literate women. It was this force of women who took up the task of consolidating DWCRA groups in quarry and gem cutting, by imparting leadership training and by working closely with the DWCRA members on their problems. The TLC women's committees are functioning in the post literacy phase as lobbyists, spokespersons, and supporters of DWCRA women and gender justice in general.

Thesis 7

In the TLC, the process is as important as the product, and this should be taken into account in any scientific assessment/ evaluation of TLC .

Discussion on evaluation tends to centre around evaluation of "learning outcomes." This is understandable, and the key objective of the TLC is the achievement of specified literacy and numerical competencies by the target learner population. But, in the case of India's current mass literacy campaigns, the avowed objective in terms of learning outcomes includes, besides specified literacy and numeric levels, functionality and awareness as well. These are inherently qualitative in character and not amenable to simple, scalar measurement. So even in terms of evaluation of learning outcomes, one has to go beyond the somewhat more readily measurable literacy and numerical norms, and must look at the qualitative aspects central to functionality and awareness.

There is a more fundamental issue to be considered. A process which looks at evaluation primarily as a question of measurement of learning outcomes confines its attention exclusively to the designated target learners. In a people's movement for literacy, however, the campaign process is characterised precisely by dialectical, two-way learning. Every participant in the TLC

is, in a non-trivial sense, a learner. This is, of course, demonstrated strikingly in the case of volunteer instructors. The teaching-learning process, as well as every other process of a TLC, transforms the volunteer remarkably, and in many cases even more dramatically than it does the student. The volunteer learns a great deal, especially in the areas of functionality and awareness, where (as has often been remarked) the roles of the student and volunteer are quite the reverse of their designated roles.

The process of learning, in its widest as well as its delimited sense, includes as its participants not merely the students but also the designated "volunteer instructors." It necessarily includes every participant, instructor or master trainer, resource person or district academic committee member, full time co-ordinator or District Collector, and its consequences are quite palpable. Skills and strengths such as greater self-confidence, a new resourcefulness and presence of mind to tackle complex situations, an enhanced ability to manage inter-personal relationships, effective communication skills, greater gender sensitivity, a more keenly felt humanism, both in the general and in the concrete ensue - these are what many participants in the TLC acquire as a consequence of the campaign process.

The strength of participatory structures such as village and panchayat committees, student-youth committees and women's committees is very much a function of the quality of the partnership process.

Besides the enormous, leap-frogging development of human resources that the TLC process makes possible, there are also the participatory structures created in this process. To the extent that these structures - village and panchayat committees, student-youth committees, women's committees, etc. - do function in a live manner, they provide a basis for launching people's movements going much beyond literacy, to health for all. The strength of such participatory structures is very much a function of the quality of the TLC process.

If the mass literacy campaign is to be a people's movement, and not a mere official or non-official literacy programme, its agenda must necessarily be much wider than certain narrowly-defined "learning outcomes." This implies that the process of the campaign is as important as the product.

The story of Pudukkottai's literacy campaign is, of course, far from over. The campaign is now in its even more difficult and challenging post-literacy phase. But the truly remarkable phenomenon is that more than four years after the start of the TLC,

of the more than thirty thousand volunteer instructors, grassroots organisers and other literacy activists who were motivated then, a large percentage still remain actively involved. There have been many ups and downs, interruptions of various kinds, administrative discontinuities and countervailing pressures of various kinds. Yet, through it all, the vast majority of literacy activists have stuck it out, and have now been joined by thousands of neo-literate women who have begun to assert themselves in myriad ways. Therein lies the basic strength of the mass literacy campaign as a people's movement.

A Post Script - Some Issues

Since the Pudukkottai District TLC was sanctioned in June 1991, we have seen an enormous expansion of the TLC programme. By late-September 1994, NLMA had sanctioned literacy campaign projects in 282 districts and as many as 83 post-literacy projects. Practically all states and Union Territories had projects under way, but the coverage was uneven across states.

There had been a massive expansion, not only in terms of districts, but also in terms of the target population. By September 1994, TLC projects had a total target leaner population of 66.09 million of whom 47.37 million had reportedly been enrolled, and 23.36 million had successfully completed the three primers.

Such a rapid expansion has predictably brought forth a number of problems. A study of these is necessary, if one is not to take an overly euphoric view of the TLC model, going just by the early experience of Kerala and of districts like Pudukkottai.

Rapid Expansion

One major problem has been that of indiscriminate expansion. In the initial phase, up to early 1992, for Tamil Nadu as a whole, a considerable amount of preparation and environment-building activities drawn mainly from the people's science movements went in before the projects came up for sanction. The Bharat Gyan Vigyan Jatha of 1990 in particular, had played an important role in creating a literacy-friendly environment and in generating a demand for literacy in several districts. It was mostly these districts which came up with TLC proposals in 1991-92. In all these cases, the District Collectors were usually highly motivated, and there was an equally highly motivated core group of literacy activists at the grass roots. However, there was soon a flood of TLC proposals before the NLMA, many of them from districts very poorly prepared for a mass literacy campaign. There were several reasons for this development. The NLMA leadership itself was keen to achieve financial targets in terms of utilising the allocations made under this head. There were also political pressures, ranging from those exerted by elected representatives from various constituencies

(including ministers, MPs and MLAs), to those exerted by state governments. With literacy campaigns attracting media attention, and in the light of the perception that it was a highly visible programme which would reflect well on them, many District Collectors and state - level officers in charge of adult education wanted to join the literacy band wagon. With all these factors at work, the result was an overly rapid expansion, with many campaigns being sanctioned when the districts concerned were hardly ready for it. This has naturally had implications for effectiveness, and has also eroded the credibility of the TLC model.

Besides the problems caused by indiscriminate expansion, difficulties have also arisen from the inability of the participants concerned to internalise the ethos, structures and logic of the TLC model. Even with the best of teams the TLC was a tough proposition, requiring constant vigilance against ego problems, careful team work and eighteen-hour work days. With Collectors and teams which were hardly prepared, weak environments, an uncomprehending bureaucracy and inexperienced full-timers, many of the TLCs in the post-1992 period did badly.

Pressure to Succeed

The prestige attached to the TLC at the official and media levels and the severe problems on the ground was an explosive combination. It naturally generated pressures for false reporting, since a prestigious programme could not possibly be "allowed to fail." In many districts, the inherently weak information system dependent on volunteer reporting, broke down quickly under the weight of a bureaucratic compulsion to report success. An excessive and one-sided focus on the quantitative aspects and a pressure to report high percentages not only eroded the credibility of the TLC, but also demoralised the volunteers and activists. It corrupted some of the activists who quickly saw the "benefits" of exaggerated achievement reporting. However, most activists and volunteers were unhappy to go along with the game of false reporting, even if the exigencies of survival forced them into an uneasy compromise. As a result, the campaigns suffered from volunteer drop-out, apathy and cynicism. With monthly MIS reports demanded at every stage, "achievement reporting" and "form filling" became almost an obsession with bureaucrats and the "bureaucratised" full-timers down the line. Worse, the feeling emerged in many districts that the TLC was turning into the centre-based NAEP, whose bane had been "targetitis" and the built-in incentives for false reporting.

Centralisation

If the excessive concern with reporting high levels of quantitative achievement was one manifestation of non-internalisation of the TLC ethos, another equally important manifestation was the short shrift given to

genuine decentralisation and flexibility in procedure. Initially, in an effort to get state governments more interested in taking up literacy campaigns and enhance their commitment to the programme, the NLMA encouraged the formation of state level literacy missions or councils, similar to NLMA. The results, however, were often rather different from what was intended. The involvement of the state bureaucracy usually meant the involvement of the old adult education bureaucracy, whose hostility led them to attempt to "control" District Collectors and TLCs rather than playing an enabling and facilitating role. Decision-making tended to become centralised, if not by design, at least by default, in cases where the District Collectors were unwilling to assert their leadership of literacy campaigns or unsure of themselves.

A similar process of centralisation took place within the district, often managed by serving and retired bureaucrats with little understanding of TLC concept. Such centralisation inevitably weakened, and in some instances altogether destroyed, local initiatives. A related consequence of centralisation was that the campaign procedures also became increasingly inflexible and rule-bound. With unclear rules, paralysis was often the result. As the programme expanded and moved on to less favourable territory it was inevitable that more problems would surface. The tendencies towards centralisation and bureaucratisation had an especially pernicious effect. They sapped the campaign of its key source of energy; voluntarism. It was difficult to generate and sustain volunteer enthusiasm and that of committed full-time activists in the face of bureaucratisation. The understanding that the TLC had to make the transition from being a government-funded project to becoming a people's movement could hardly be implemented under such circumstances.

Contradictions

A final word on the degenerative trends in the mass literacy campaign is in order. All said and done, the mass literacy campaigns were taking place in a non-revolutionary social milieu, marked by widespread apathy and cynicism, and with most sections of the people facing acute economic problems. Even revolutionary social movements have historically found it very difficult to sustain mass enthusiasm and motivation at high levels over long periods. It is therefore not entirely surprising that mass literacy campaigns have run into the kinds of problems enumerated. It is important to note a basic contradiction here. The message of empowerment of non-literates, implied the empowerment of the rural poor, the women and the *dalits*. This was an agenda hardly palatable to the rural (or, for that matter, urban) elite. The prevalent political, economic and social power structures could hardly be expected to support the progressive content of the literacy

campaigns. Yet, both in the *kalajathas*, the key mobilisation tool, and in the teaching-learning material, the presence of progressive content in a sharp form served to enthuse the mass of literacy activists, volunteers and learners. On the other hand, the district administration had to be sensitive to political problems arising from the process and content of the literacy campaign, between local elites and activists. The inherent difficulties in tackling this basic contradiction also contributed to the failure of literacy campaigns in many instances.

A New Agenda

The point of the foregoing discussion is not to conclude that such campaigns are bound to fail. The point rather is that one needs to be aware of the limitations and constraints within which these campaigns have been and are being conducted. Despite the numerous problems, and even in the worst of cases, the mass campaigns have succeeded in achieving a certain degree of social mobilisation. Similarly, whatever the weaknesses in imparting literacy and numeric skills to the learner population, the campaigns have succeeded to some extent at least, in spreading a culture of voluntarism and mass participation. The literacy campaigns have led practically everywhere, to health, primary education and women's development being placed on the agenda for public discussion and collective action. The campaigns have also created a very large, sensitised youth force, consisting equally of women and men committed at various levels to a progressive and secular agenda for social transformation.

Post-Literacy

This discussion would not be complete without a reference to the problems of post-literacy and continuing education. Perhaps the most important failure of the strategies attempted in the last five years to achieve universal adult literacy has been in respect of post-literacy. The need for continuity, though often conceded at a conceptual level, has almost always been ignored in practice. Even the most successful TLCs have had to suffer breaks of several months' duration before a post-literacy project got under way. The delay between literacy and post-literacy phases and the resultant break leading to relapse into illiteracy, the conceptual basis as well as strategies for post-literacy and continuing education are in a state of flux. This is an area where the emerging experience from a number of districts needs to be synthesised to arrive at a clearer conceptual and strategic framework for post-literacy.

When one looks at the Pudukkottai TLC of 1991-92 today, in the light of the somewhat discouraging national experience with more recent literacy campaigns, one is certainly struck by the intensity and nature of social mobilisation that took place. One is especially impressed by the magnitude of achievement of Pudukkottai's rural poor,

who defied hostile conditions of existence to acquire literacy in large numbers. However one is also sobered by the thought that the outcome was contingent on a favourable combination of circumstances: a committed team of administrators and activists, a compact and well-connected territory, and the "revolutionary lean" of the early phase of the TLC at the national level. That the success of Pudukkottai's TLC was not entirely a "contingent" outcome is demonstrated by similar successes achieved elsewhere in Tamil Nadu and India, such as Nellore in Andhra Pradesh and Burdwan in West Bengal. In fact, there is now enough evidence from literacy campaigns in different parts of the country that the mass literacy campaign is viable both in theory and practice. Three years later, while Pudukkottai's literacy activists are continuing the work at the grassroots level, it is clear that it has not been possible to sustain the momentum of the TLC phase. Nevertheless this momentum has helped sustain, albeit at a reduced level, the motivation and energy of a sizeable proportion of activists, from the district core group to the grassroots. Women's groups, youth committees and district and block resource groups are still active, and hold out the promise of repeated waves of resurgence in the months and years to come.

Even in a highly motivated campaign, given the cultural milieu within which the Indian bureaucracy operates and its reward system, "relapse rates" into a non-involved conventional bureaucratic mode of behaviour can be quite high.

CREDIT - THE MAHAM EXPERIENCE

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Introduction

India had long ago taken up the role of welfare state. Addressing the chronic problem of rampant poverty seemed to require the special attention of the government. In contrast, it was widely felt that the private sector could not really provide the solutions.

There have since been numerous attempts to bring about social and economic equality, but the feeling has been growing that the task is too daunting to be done by the government alone, due to certain limitations. The magnitude of the task, the size of the underprivileged population and the variation in the needs of different geographical areas indicate the necessity for an alternate solution. There has been a growing movement to involve NGOs in addressing these problems.

The Project

In 1989, a unique project was launched in Tamil Nadu under the aegis of Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women in the district of Dharmapuri. With financial assistance from International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), this project was initiated to focus on the socio-economic development of women below the poverty line. The project was later extended to Salem and South Arcot in 1991 and to Madurai and Ramanathapuram in 1993. The project aims at covering 1,15,000 women and assisting 84,000 women in the period up to 1998-99. Though most of the project's components have similarities with other ongoing projects, a combination of the right ingredients thrown in the right measure at the right time has contributed to its success. Hence, the project is unique though it has few new elements.

The Concept

The project aims to bring together women below the poverty line in villages to form groups of 20-25. These groups basically promote thrift and credit. Each decides on the amount to be saved and opens a bank account in which the group leader, called the animator, deposits the sum. The group generally meets twice a month to complete financial transactions and to discuss matters of importance.

An important factor for the success of partnership is the handing over of complete responsibility to the NGOs, and also independence in terms of selection and functioning.

The tasks of bringing women together and facilitating their interaction are done by NGOs which have a contract with Tamil Nadu Women's Development Project. The Department's project officers do not come into the picture at all as far as group formation, meetings and management of savings are concerned.

The groups are allowed to mature by letting the women carry on their saving and credit activities. Group loans, or a *sangha kadan*, as they are called, are decided by the group depending on the genuineness of demand and availability of money. The quantum of loan, interest and repayment are all group decisions. The NGO only serves as a facilitator, motivating and educating the group of women.

The Process

After the group has stabilised, project officials and the bank (Indian Bank in this case) come into the picture. The group, with the help of the NGO, decides on who should get what kind of activity out of the approved rural development activities. The proposal is appraised by a group of officers from the Project Implementation Unit of that district along with the bank officials and sanctioned. With technical inputs coming from the Project Implementation Unit and line department and with motivation from NGO, the women get down to the task of income generation and repayment of loan. The bank gives the entire loan amount, a portion coming as subsidy from the project, which remains as fixed deposit in the bank for 3 years, by which time the loan is repaid and the money given as incentive.

Thus, the project is a combination of old ideas similar to IRDP or DWCRA, and also thrift and credit strategies adopted by Indian NGOs. Its uniqueness lies in the locking of the subsidy and the involvement of NGOs along with the group's right to decision-making. The combination of these features makes the project distinctive and contributes to its overall success.

NGOs are selected by the District Project Co-ordination Committee headed by the Collector, and Tamil Nadu Women's Development Corporation enters into agreement with them. The following process is then initiated:

1. *Selection of women* below poverty line.
2. *Formation of groups.*
3. *Selection of animator* democratically.
4. *Saving of small amounts* as decided by the group.
5. *Group loan* - decided by group based on need.
6. *Bank loan* - activity decided by group.
7. *Repayment of loan* - ensured by group.
8. *Training* - for skill development, etc., as a continuous activity to ensure maturity of the group.

A Model for Rural Development

Government - run programmes have several inherent problems, of which the biggest is the lack of personal involvement. In the "big monster" of government, there is no personal involvement and responsibility. As most functionaries are subject to transfer, the government takes on a faceless, impersonal appearance, with lack of accountability. The result is a reluctance to interact with functionaries. Still worse, programmes designed at the top often try to fit a uniform formula to diverse areas.

The aid of NGOs in delivery of services to women beneficiaries solves these problems to a great extent, as they present a face of continuity to women who can identify them as their friends. NGOs also encourage need-based activities, which ultimately leads to a higher success rate. Finally, NGOs can effectively create a sense of responsibility amongst women, resulting in a high rate of repayment for bank as well as *Sangha* loans.

This model for government-NGO partnership is based on accepting NGOs in the implementation of anti-poverty or empowerment programmes. Expertise and strategies of a different kind and different attitudes and orientation are required to handle the specialised needs of the rural poor. For various reasons, government may find itself inadequate to handle the wide spectrum of approaches necessary, but this is precisely what many NGOs are good at. The IFAD-funded Tamil Nadu Women's Development Project is probably the first experiment of partnership between government and NGOs in implementing a rural development programme for the most vulnerable section of society, that is, women. The project's success demonstrates the potential of this symbiotic relationship.

The roles of the partners (NGOs, government and bank) have been clearly defined in the project. An attempt has been made to do away even with the concept of line of command and formal organisation for the implementing partners as can be seen from the organisational chart in Figure 1.

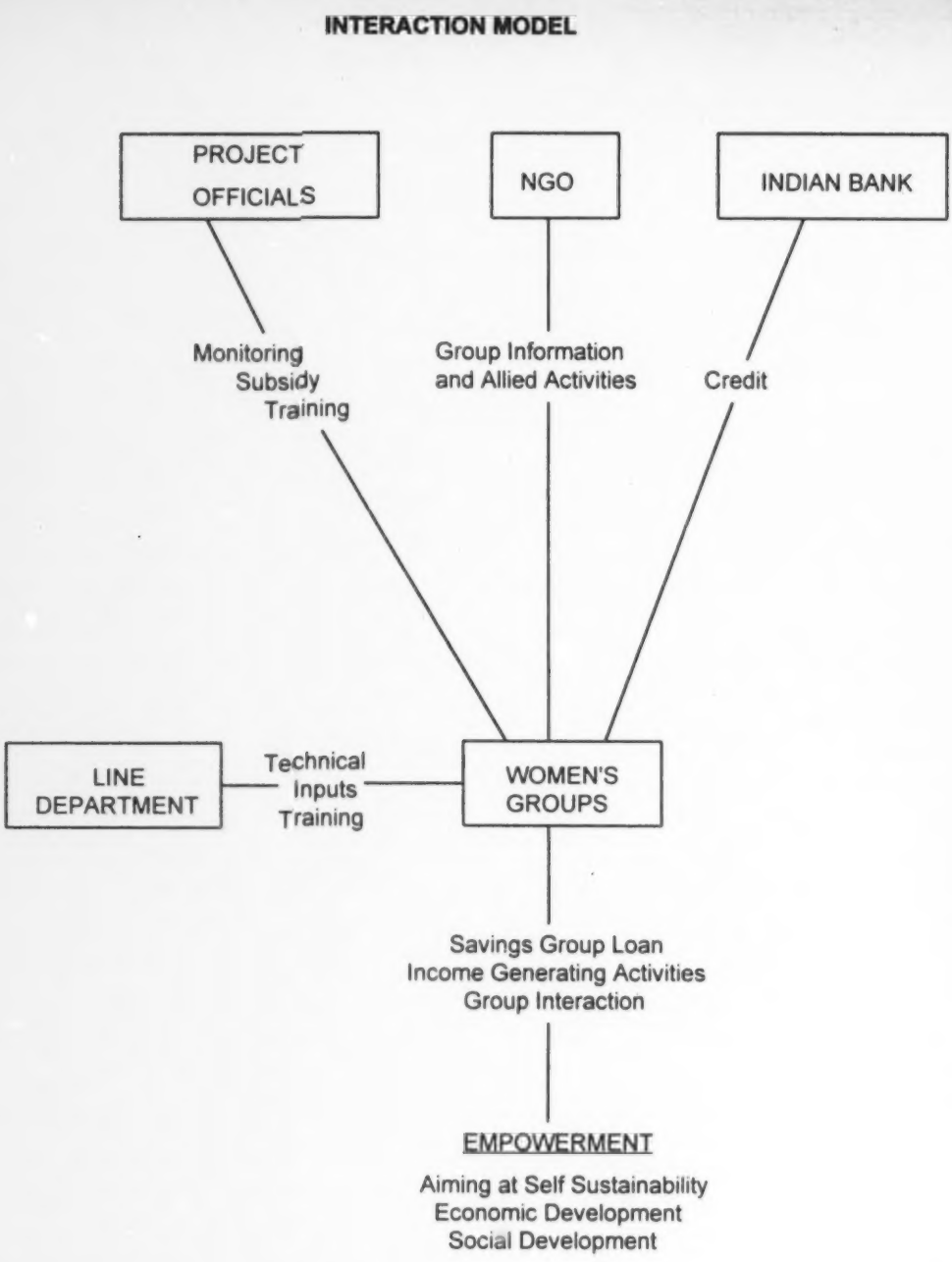

Figure 1. Organisational model of MAHAM project.

Factors Underlying Success

Reasons for this project's sucess include:

1. *No formal set up:* One factor that can cause hiccups in NGO-government relationship is the question of control and command. There is no such constraint in the project and a more informal relationship and interaction has generally been envisaged.

2. *Complete independence and delegation of responsibility to NGOs:* As far as the functioning of groups and their development is concerned, NGOs have complete responsibility and also independence in terms of selection and functioning. The project only provides guidelines and sets up goals.

3. *No political or bureaucratic interference:* Unlike some government-run programmes where there is constant interference from agencies, in this project total democracy is found in groups. All monetary decisions are taken by groups regarding who gets what kind of role, and the NGO acts as a guide, with the assistance of project guidelines.

4. *Free interaction between NGO & government:* Meetings and workshops ensure that the channel of communication is always open between the two partners. All new ideas to be introduced in the project are debated with all partners during such interactions and only then are they implemented. Thus, a feeling of partnership is maintained instead of imposition or compulsion. The NGOs feel that the project belongs to them, and they are not being used as mere tools of implementation but are agents of change.

5. *Monetary gains:* One reason for the project having good relationships is the non-availability of high monetary gains. Due to a very marginal compensation given to NGOs as operational cost, known as the support cost, only genuine NGOs come to stay with the project, meaning those motivated by considerations of service and not money.

Problems

Despite a rewarding experience with this partnership, some problems have arisen. Those listed below are organisation-specific and do not occur uniformly. There have been positive steps towards solving these problems as they arise, but it is still worthwhile to discuss a few:

1. *Bureaucratisation:* This sometimes presents itself with NGOs which have a larger resource base. They often turn into bureaucratised organisations similar to government and even have transfer of personnel from time to time, leading to the same problems as in government. Predictably, their implementation

process is marred by problems similar to those of government. The women in the groups again end up seeing the same facelessness in the NGO.

2. *Multiplicity of programmes:* In order to be cost-effective, NGOs have to take up more and more programmes. This sometimes leads to loss of focus and they become just another implementation agency - one day speaking of sanitation and the next of women's empowerment.

3. *Treating Tamil Nadu Women's Development Project as one among many programmes:* As a result of having many other programmes to implement, some NGOs tend to give very little importance to Tamil Nadu Women's Development Project, especially since it is not very remunerative. Loss of interest can lead to tardy implementation. As no punitive action can be taken against them, those who feel no moral responsibility can cause problems.

4. *New designs without consultation/ approval:* Though the project can take pride in the fact that it is very flexible, it still has to maintain a sense of direction. At the same time, in order to fit the empowerment programme into their own ideology, sometime NGOs tend to mould it according to their wish. This leads to a situation where the project itself may end up being a mosaic of differently-run groups and may not ever emerge as a coherent model.

5. *Lack of infrastructure:* Most NGOs do not have adequate funds for the infrastructure to carry out the field-intensive activities of the project. When NGOs are unable to handle the quantum of work, quality suffers.

6. *Follow up:* Every group in the project is expected to receive an average time span of 3 years before it gradually takes responsibility for itself. This aspect tends to suffer the most, because some NGOs may find devoting manpower and infrastructure to mere follow-up quite useless. Complacency may dissipate energy and slow development of groups.

Conclusion

The Tamil Nadu Women's Development Project has emerged as an appropriate model of NGO-government partnership, as proved by its success since 1989.

As that success continues, the women's groups will take over the expenditure involved in their functioning, grow strong enough to continue their nexus with government and financial institutions without any help from the project or the NGOs and also become the focus for delivery of rural services. That will be the day when this model of partnership will be hailed as a successful one.

MYRADA - A BACKGROUND NOTE

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MYRADA

Introduction

MYRADA is an acronym that stands for Mysore Resettlement and Development Agency. Started in 1968 as a Registered Society with headquarters at Bangalore, the main objective was resettlement of 20,000 Tibetan refugees in Karnataka. This project was completed successfully in 1978. With the experience gained and the infrastructure available, MYRADA took up integrated rural development projects in backward districts, and currently runs 18 projects in three states: Karnataka, Andhra and Tamil Nadu.

The MYRADA/PLAN Project in Dharmapuri, with a focus on poor women and children, facilitates sustainable socio-economic and cultural development by :

- Acting as a catalyst in establishing local level institutions.
- Motivating women and children groups to improve their health, education and infrastructural facilities.
- Promoting optimal utilisation of available resources (including credit) by participatory resource planning.
- Providing training and consultancy services to voluntary agencies in and around the project area.
- Working with and influencing the policies of government and financial institutions in favour of the downtrodden.
- Establishing active development sponsorship communication.

Design for Partnership

Small Group Approach

The project has helped in building local self-help institutions with appropriate management systems and technical skills. Effort has gone into non-formal education and development of groups to manage common funds for

savings and credit. In addition, participants are encouraged to network with other groups with similar aims and functions.

Managing funds involves advancing loans to members for income generation or consumption, and recovering them, with interest rates ranging from 12% to 24%.

There are 520 women's groups today, the total savings of all the groups amount to nearly Rs. 2 crores, and the rotation of savings towards loans totals nearly Rs. 10 crores, with a 100% recovery rate.

Appropriate Sociology

MYRADA has assisted in developing mini-watersheds, biogas programmes, fuel-efficient smokeless stoves, hand brick-making machines and appropriate construction technologies, cheap drip and pot irrigation systems, new agricultural cropping systems for dry land areas, sericulture technology, and cottage industries. However, "appropriate" technology was not introduced unless the people first understood it and in many cases had the opportunity to modify it to make it more truly appropriate. This then, is the starting point of what can be described as "appropriate sociology" - the emergence of management systems from within self-help groups that let them take fuller advantage of the resources now available, improve upon them, and add to them - all this without violently upsetting social relationships.

Self-Help Groups

Work with several hundred groups has helped identify certain common features that distinguish the successful groups from the not-so-successful. To be successful the groups need to be:

1. *Homogeneous:* All members should be from one economic stratum - those below poverty line. If they are also from the same occupational group, it becomes a further contributing factor to success.

2. *Small:* Preferably not more than 20 to 25 members in a group.

3. *Multi-purpose:* Involved in an integrated set of activities in order to be self-sustaining.

4. *Voluntary:* Developed from below and evolving their own rules and regulations.

5. *Informal and fully participatory:* The management of decisions has to be arrived at through consensus.

6. *Non-Political:* Party politics do not have a role in these groups.

It may be seen that these groups differ from traditional co-operatives (until now considered the most representative and participatory of all people's groups) on every single count, from size and structure, to procedure and style of functioning.

Through the women's groups, development projects are implemented with the active participation and contribution of the women in the form of time, labour, money and materials. Their training needs are assessed and regular training is conducted.

Economic Development

The women's group members have access to credit with subsidy for creation of assets and income-generation enterprises under the Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women project funded by International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The beneficiaries get loans through the group, which monitors the maintenance of assets and prompt repayment of the loans.

MYRADA/PLAN Dharmapuri project has trained over 200 women as masons, welders, auto drivers and photographers, among other non-traditional, non-farm trades, which has helped enhance their income four or five fold.

Social Development

The non-formal training provides the base for social development. The women of the groups have now gained courage and self-confidence for their own development. The education of children, especially of girls, which was neglected in the past, has now gained importance; the school drop-out rate has been brought down from 75% to 10%, the pass percentage in public examinations is improving and Mother-Teacher councils and Parent-Teacher Associations are active.

The women's groups meet regularly once a week, discuss their problems and take decisions affecting their life and community. They contribute towards their family income and are consulted in all matters by their families. Their status in society has improved and they also undertake various activities on their own with their own resources.

Linkages

The women's groups have developed direct links with the banks, which are now ready to extend credit to the groups without any collateral security under the NABARD refinances scheme.

Through the Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development of Women project, the groups have direct links with various government departments including education, health, revenue, police, forest, PWD, agriculture, sericulture, horticulture, agro-engineering, block development, civil supplies and others.

The groups are recognised by the public and government as a powerful institution to foster development without selfishness and corruption. This sustainable people's institution will function even after MYRADA withdraws from the area.

OUTCOMES: DESIGN FOR PARTNERSHIP

Following the presentations of speakers, the participants in this consultation discussed the barriers to partnership, and offered possible solutions. The outcomes of this dialogue are summarised in the following section. This "Design for Partnership" provides a framework for changes in public policy as well as guidelines for NGOs seeking to work more closely with government.

The Concept of Partnership

Participants affirmed the general need and importance of partnership between non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and government agenices. However, participants also agreed that this need for partnership must be felt on both sides before a healthy relationship can be established. Each partner should recognise the other's strengths and limitations, and together work out action plans to achieve common goals in child care.

At the same time, the concept of partnership cannot be limited only to a relationship between the government and the NGO. Participants emphasized the need to recognise the importance of the "third force" in partnership, the grassroots community structures and the elected local bodies which can play a crucial role in child care services.

The Essentials of Partnership

It was agreed that trust and flexibility are the two essential factors that contribute to the sustainability of partnership.

1. *Trust:* The first step in forming a relationship is to build trust, the foundation of successful partnership. A facilitative environment for dialogue must be created on both sides, by being open and sharing information, and structures to build trust have to be worked on, which can provide for regular consultation, meeting, review and orientation. For example, at the national level, there is no NGO representation in the National Creche Fund. It may be worthwhile to have 3 or 4 NGOs on the Board of Directors. There can also be annual consultations at the district level and the local level. The right environment must be created by NGOs

and government, not only with each other, but also with the people, to help them realise their rights and duties and to empower them for working together. This requires structures through which regular interactions can take place between people's representatives, NGOs and government at several levels.

2. *Flexibility:* Programmes have to be flexible, allowing for local variations. But experience shows that once a scheme has been formulated, it is difficult to make it flexible, because of various procedural requirements and bureaucratic norms. There is really no need for unitary structures across the country. The goal should be to devolve powers to the local bodies and structures which would develop suitable programmes at the local level.

   Hence, one may think of a radical departure from the "scheme" approach and advocate that funding be on the basis of *per child norms* (in the case of child care services) which may be fixed in relation to certain variables such as age-group of children and geographical location. The government may decide how much funding can be given per child per day or year, and the local body, community structure or NGO could work out a flexible programme suited to local conditions and needs. Accountability will be both financial and programmatic, to government and to the community, and can be ensured by appropriate procedures.

   When child care is devolved to the local bodies, there may be a need for a structure or forum where child care workers, social activists and policy makers can come together to review ground level experiences, share insights and plan jointly. Such structures should be allowed to emerge and evolve according to need.

Partnership Strategies

To catalyse and sustain partnership, it is necessary to take cognisance of the following strategies emerging from the discussion of successful experiences in partnership.

1. *Empowerment of communities:* The ultimate goal of partnership among the triad of NGOs, government and the elected local bodies is the empowerment of the community, particularly women. Partnership experiences so far have clearly indicated the possibility of a qualitative charge in gender perceptions wherever women have participated more openly and durably, facilitated by the group concept which has been the bedrock of several successful partnerships. Involvement of women as leaders in such partnership has contributed immensely to their empowerment, effectively countering

the broker role of politicians. For example, the issue of corruption can be tackled only through empowerment. NGOs can play a significant role in empowering people to fight their own battles. However, the view that economic empowerment of women by itself can lead directly to better child care is unrealistic, since the relationship is not so direct or simple.

To create a sense of ownership of programmes and services, the people must be involved in planning and monitoring and have the power to take decisions and act. This implies the formation of a four-cornered partnership: one between the government, NGOs, local bodies and the community. NGOs can facilitate this process by identifying community leaders, educating and motivating them to contest the elections to local bodies.

Another important role for NGOs is sharing information on available schemes, budgets and areas of operation without ulterior motives. NGOs must enable the community to empower itself rather than themselves "build structures," by encouraging members of the community themselves to participate in the handling of both resources and tasks, and by becoming co-partners with elected local bodies in the design and implementation of programmes. NGOs should lobby actively for child care services to become a local body responsibility. Gram sabhas, local committees, people's committees for the child care and women's groups can become effective support structures for child care programmes.

2. *Working with the government:* Government is a powerful force, and NGOs must try to make that force come to their aid in the service of the people. NGOs may have to perform more of a watchdog role than a directive role. Transparency in handling public funds, for instance, can be demanded and ensured by NGOs. The reality of the governmental system must be accepted, and it may be necessary to work with that system in order to replicate successful experiences, since the government's support is necessary for any partnership to succeed. In such partnerships there are bound to be personal problems and ego-clashes, and NGOs must learn to tackle these.

The experiences of successful partnership ventures show that it is best to have clear understanding of the limitations of working with the governmental system, and to work without illusions. Partnership with the governmental system would also mean working with the political system, and hence NGOs must recognise the legitimacy of political parties and strive to work with them.

An issue of concern is the frequent transfer of officials in charge of programmes, which tends to affect both sustainability and efficiency. Further, new government officials need training, orientation and sensitisation, especially to ensure continuity when new officers assume charge. While ultimately this must be accepted as inevitable, strong local structures and NGOs may be better able to provide continuity.

3. *Forming grassroots structures:* NGOs must be ready to work with the local elected bodies, and may assist in building grassroots level structures or facilitating their growth. To foster self-reliance, NGOs must withdraw gradually once structures are in place, though it has been seen that they are sometimes reluctant to do so.

   Sharing information at grassroots level and collecting information to pass on to government is an important two-way communication role for NGOs, and is essential for the identification of appropriate resources. For example, religious groups and endowments can be motivated to meet the needs of the local communities with the direction of suitable NGOs.

   While it is important for NGOs not to take clear-cut political sides in local body elections, indirect support may be necessary to encourage the right kind of candidates, especially women, to contest. Even more importantly, NGOs need to create awareness among the people about the right kind of leadership.

   Success has to be seen in the context of the performance of local structures, and the *Arivoli Iyakkam* is an example of this. In the campaign, the money was channelled to locally formed organisations rather than an NGO. Grassroots structures in the form of women's groups can provide similar support to child care activities. Their collective strength coupled with the power of information can transform them into a force, which NGOs can be instrumental in mobilising.

4. *Networking:* This is one of the important strategies to facilitate and sustain partnership. Networking of NGOs should be on a voluntary basis, and a government-sponsored network is a contradiction in terms. At the same time, networks must work with government at another level. Networking should essentially be for sharing of experiences and learning by interaction. Networking and funding should not be directly linked, though information about funding may be accessed through a network. Existing procedures for funding NGOs may be followed, with appropriate rigour, by government, rather than channelling funds through sponsored networks.

The Campaign Approach

A campaign approach for success is one of the lessons that can be learned from the *Arivoli Iyakkam*. However, while the positive characteristics of this approach are many, running a campaign in a climate not suited to radical changes may limit its operational success. In a good campaign, the pace is blistering. This makes it difficult for vested interests to keep pace. Also, while a campaign approach may be easy with a single point agenda such as literacy, it may prove to be difficult with permanent and complex issues of child care. Strong grassroots structures can no doubt contribute to the sustainability of such a campaign, which is also likely to be affected by political changes.

Some negative outcomes are also possible in the campaign approach, which have to be guarded against. At one time, literacy campaigns became fashionable and district level officials began to see this as a viable programme, so pressure began to build up from various sources like politicians and other interest groups to get projects sanctioned for their respective areas. Very little attention was paid to ground preparation and since a highly visible campaign cannot be allowed to fail, there was intense pressure to reach targets of 95% enrolment. This caused a feeling of unease among activists, who were faced with a choice of either getting out of the campaign or going along with the pressure to report. **As a result of these developments, the campaign itself became devalued.**

Rapid expansion of a campaign into hostile territory also causes problems. In a milieu where class and political structures are powerful, there are bound to be contradictions, and enthusiastic government officials often have a tough time in convincing their superiors about the good work being done. Therefore, a campaign of this nature cannot be replicated too rapidly.

That volunteers from all walks of life can be a rich resource to be tapped for development work has been established by several success stories, especially in campaigns. However, a clear distinction must be drawn between professionalism and volunteerism. They are complementary and can support each other instead of being in conflict. The spirit of volunteerism exists among the people and it can be channelled for beneficial purposes by NGOs.

Volunteers are a constantly changing group, who need to be identified and trained, as well as motivated and encouraged through non-monetary benefits. As volunteer turnover is always high, there is a need to continuously assess needs, recruit and expand the scope for voluntary action. Drawing on the spirit of volunteerism latent in many people is exemplified in the literacy campaigns. NGOs must focus on this aspect, rather than acting as mere accessors of resources.

Managing Child Care Services

While child care services must be recognised as a societal responsibility, and the state must not abdicate its commitment to it financially, this does not necessarily mean that the state must take up the administration of services operationally. Rather, it implies providing adequate funds to elected local bodies, NGOs and other structures responsible for providing the services for child care. But providing the budget alone is not enough.

Child care should be brought on the community's agenda through effective mobilisation strategies, drawing on the experience of mass literacy campaigns where folk art forms and *kala jathas* were successfully used to create public awareness. The awareness of needs, possibilities, rights and responsibilities has to be the basis for mobilisation, and NGOs can play an effective role in this. Again, community structures and local governments must play the primary role in child care programmes, while NGOs serve as facilitators. Local structures should actually operate child care services and NGOs should avoid contracting themselves out as "implementers."

It must be recognised that the recently announced policy of government to farm out the ICDS to NGOs is linked to financial constraints. Considering the pressures building up for the last 5-10 years to recognise child care workers as workers and not "volunteers," which would imply paying them a full wage, government is naturally anxious to hand over the services to NGOs who would then find themselves in the same financial trap.

Child care workers must be recognised as skilled, full-time workers and paid commensurate emoluments. Recruitment need not be linked to formal educational qualification, but provision must be made for adequate and continuous training, and for advancement. Local persons, both men and women, must be recruited, and local bodies should have a say in the recruitment. People's committees, including local body representatives, parent and women's groups and child care workers can form the supporting and monitoring structure for purposes for guidance.

Government Services

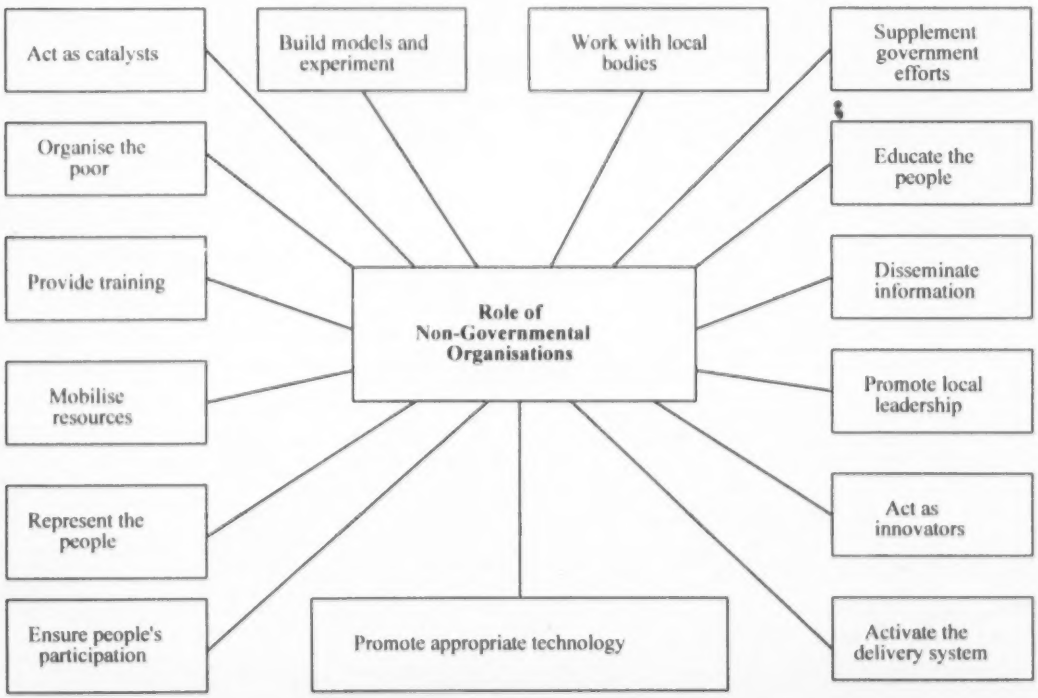
The role of NGOs is also of importance, though in a different way, with reference to partnership for child care through government services. All districts in Tamil Nadu are covered by the network of Noon Meals and other child care centres which can become the focal points for yet another kind of partnership. In the context of the reduction in child care centre timings because of government's inability to pay wages for full-time work, NGOs can concentrate on promoting better delivery of services while at the same time supporting

the workers' requests for better wages. Again, with regard to the poorly maintained physical infrastructure of the centres, are there NGOs able to adopt a few centres and maintain them? Can they ensure proper hygiene and a clean environment? Can they explore the possibility of maintaining a kitchen garden in the centre?

While it is ideal to have locally recruited women as child care workers, this is often not followed, and NGOs can step in and assist in reducing worker turnover due to wrong recruitment. NGOs can also play a tremendous part in training child care workers, and should focus more and more on providing technical inputs rather than getting involved in service delivery. Awareness building, documentation of information and on-the-job training are some domains that NGOs can function in and develop with unique advantage. Today, it is difficult to get even 10% contribution from the community in terms of money or materials. NGOs can play a major role in kindling the spirit of volunteerism and increasing community participation.

Role of NGOs

The expanding meaning of the term partnership has many implications for NGOs. Some of these are spelled out in the figure below. It is in these directions that NGOs must move in order to give new meaning to the concept of partnership.



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Design for Partnership . . . Some Pointers

The "third force" in partnership, the elected local bodies, and the fourth partner, grassroots community structures, must be recognised.

Trust is the foundation for partnership, and the first step is to create a facilitative environment for dialogue.

Programmes have to be flexible, allowing for local variations. There is need for a radical departure from the scheme approach, towards funding on the basis of per child norms.

The ultimate goal of partnership is the empowerment of the community. To create a sense of ownership, the people must be involved in planning, decision-making and monitoring.

NGOs must enable the community to empower itself rather than themselves build structures.

NGOs must try to make the powerful force of government come to their aid. The reality of the governmental system must be accepted and worked with to replicate successful experiences.

Partnership also implies recognising the legitimacy of political parties and working with them.

NGOs should not take clear-cut political sides in local body elections, but indirectly support the right kind of candidates, especially women.

Child care should be brought on the community's agenda through effective community mobilisation.

The state must provide adequate funds to the various structures responsible for actually providing the child care services.

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